

THE
ROMANCE OF TRAVEL.

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THE EAST.

*IN TWO VOLUMES.*  
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BY CHARLES MAC FARLANE.

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THE
ROMANCE OF ~~TRAVEL~~ ^{TRAVEL}.

CHAPTER I.

BOTH as regards antiquity and merit, the first Romance of Travel we possess is the *Odyssey* of Homer. Many incidents related by succeeding travellers, or by the ancient writers, may be clearly traced to the voyages of the adventurous and wise Ulysses, as sung by the greatest of poets; and in several instances the chain of connection is lengthened through two thousand years, and brought down to the voyagers and travellers of the fourteenth century of our era, when we shall find credulous voyagers relating as facts several of the marvels which Homer sang of. But as there existed strong men before Agamemnon, and wise men, and adventurous, before Ulysses, so were there bold explorers of the earth and seas before the time of

“The blind old man of Scio’s rocky isle;”

and although not so much as their names is recorded, and scarcely a hint remains of their travels and adventures, we may safely conclude that they were well known to Homer, and were pressed into the service of the poems of that immortal bard.

More than this, we may assume that many of these marvellous stories were old and venerable when Homer took them up and moulded them into his curious system of cosmography. Whatever existed of the sort was sure to attract the notice of the poet ; and, perhaps, the greater part of it was communicated to him *viva voce*, upon tradition, or by some far-sailing mariner of Greece, or Asia Minor, or some one of the many isles of the *Ægean* Sea, who had seen much that he could not comprehend, and who had heard more which was still more marvellous, from the people of the East among whom he had been. In every case, we believe, there was some foundation of truth in the wonders related, and for a long time unhesitatingly believed. In truth, the imagination of man can do little more than exaggerate existing things, and make a strange combination of the true and the real. In the wildest and most creative flights of fancy we find this grotesque and startling combination of things natural and existent. This principle is to be traced in those creatures of the imagination, centaurs, satyrs, syrens, mermaids, griffins, dragons, and the like. Take the monsters to pieces, and you find that their several parts belong to some real and well-known creature. It is only by the incongruous union of these parts that the monster is made up, and that the imagination of man is displayed in the creation of it.

Of late years several ingenious writers in Germany and in France, as well as in England, have taken up some of our most popular stories, which are found current in the most distant and different parts of the world, have described their identity or very close resemblance, and have attempted to as-

certain the mode in which they have been transmitted from age to age and from country to country. These gentlemen have proved very satisfactorily that all these tales have a remote origin; but we think that they have failed whenever they have essayed to fix that origin in any one period or country. The germ of all things is hidden and undiscoverable. These tales, we believe, grew up by slow degrees, and were not *made* (not even the simplest of them) by one mind, and at once. Many of them, being made up of elements, or feelings, or principles which must exist wherever man exists, may have had separate and distant origins, and may have grown up at one and the same time, or at different periods, in various countries, without there having been any need of transmission from one country to the other.

But, to follow the clue which has been offered: some of our nursery tales, and some other pleasant fictions which are proved to have been popular in England for many years, and which seem to bear a thoroughly English character, have been traced to Germany, to France, to Italy; from Italy to Egypt and Palestine, or to Persia, and then from those eastern countries to India or to other countries of the remotest Orient; and there inquiry has stopped from want of the means of properly pursuing it farther. If the inquiry could be pursued, it might possibly be found that the tales confidently set down as being of Indian origin had previously existed in Thibet, or Cashmere, or Nepaul, or Tartary, or Siam, or Pegu, or China, or in some other country near to or even remote from India. And could their absolute origin be fixed even then? Do we not, in pursuing these origins,

hunt after a shadow? Was there not a reflux as well as a flux? Of two stories found in Egypt or Arabia and in India, might not Egypt or Arabia have exported the one and imported the other? Some of the incidents in the voyages of Ulysses, related by Homer, who never saw any other sea than the confined Midland Sea or Mediterranean, bear a close resemblance to some that are related by Oriental writers, or are current in the traditions of the inhabitants of the islands which stud the Indian Ocean, who never saw the Mediterranean, or knew of the existence of that sea. Most of these Oriental travellers' tales seem to be of a remote and indisputable antiquity. There is nothing to prove either that they were borrowed from the *Odyssey* or the older Greek legends, or that the *Odyssey* and those more ancient relations were borrowed from them. As an hypothesis, however, the latter process, or the borrowing of the Greeks from the Orientals, may be plausibly supported. The flow of ideas and of civilization was for long ages from the East to the West, and not, as is now the case, from the West to the East. In Homer's days men looked to the regions of the rising sun as the source of intellectual as well as of physical light: the wise men of the East were reputed the wisest of all the sons of men; and remoteness of distance not only lent "enchantment to the view," but threw a veil of mystery and awe over all things in, or connected with, the far Orient. In the earliest times of which we have any account, the Greek mariners and traders frequented the mouths of the Nile, where they trafficked not only with the Egyptians and Nubians, but also with the Arabs. At a very early period, apparently long

before the time of Homer, some of these Arabs had either opened a trade by sea with India and the countries beyond India, or had received in their ports traders and navigators from those countries, who brought to the Persian Gulf or to the Red Sea cinnamon, cloves, and other spices, and other sorts of commodities that were the productions of the Indian continent or isles, and that were not grown in any country to the west of the Indian Ocean. This trade with the East, which was afterwards so widely extended by the conquests of Alexander the Great, may not in these early ages have been very considerable; but it is quite certain that it existed. The materials still found in Egypt, that contributed to the preservation of the mummies, are some of them supposed to be Oriental.* In fact several of these materials were never grown in any other countries than India and the islands contiguous to it. It is conjectured that there was, even in these early times, a communication between India and Asia Minor, and even the north-eastern parts of Europe, by land; and, by means of successive caravans, through Tartary or Persia; but this was probably a very small trade compared with that which was carried on by sea, and still less is known about it. As most of the Oriental nations have a strong antipathy to a maritime life, and to anything like long voyages, and as some of the Arab tribes have been distinguished in all ages by their love of the sea and of an adventurous and wandering life, it has generally been thought that they rather went to the far East themselves than received the ships of others.

* William Vincent, D.D., Dean of Westminster: Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients in the Indian Ocean.

“That the Arabians were the first navigators of the Indian Ocean,” says Dean Vincent, “and the first carriers of Indian produce, is evident from all history, as far as history goes back; and antecedent to history, from analogy, from necessity, and from local situation.” Thus they would bring the rich Oriental commodities, the spices, the precious metals, which were purchased alike by the Pharaohs of Egypt and by King Solomon and the other monarchs of the Jews; by the Phœnicians and by the Greeks of the coast of Asia Minor; and by the Greeks who inhabited the islands of the Ægean Sea, and by those who dwelt in Attica and in other parts of continental Greece in Europe. Being an imaginative people, and above all others fond of hearing tales and marvels recited, it could not but happen that these Arabians, besides importing goods from the far East, should also import many wild eastern tales. Their own adventures, too—their voyages of two or three or more years’ duration along the coasts of continents and vast and unexplored isles, must necessarily have furnished many romantic materials for narratives and descriptions; and if travellers in all ages have been considered prone to exaggeration, how must the case have stood with people at once so imaginative, so passionately fond of the marvellous, and so ignorant of the great laws of nature?

Though not unanimous, most recent Arabic scholars seem to agree in giving a comparatively modern date to the authorship or compilation of the Arabian Nights’ Entertainment, or The Thousand and One Nights. Mr. Lane, the last, and, in fact, the first and only real translator of that inestimable collection of eastern tales, thinks it most

probable that the work was not commenced earlier than the last quarter of the fifteenth century of our era, and that it was completed before the termination of the first quarter of the next century, soon after the conquest of Egypt by the Osmanlee Turks, which happened A.D. 1517. But Mr. Lane adds that most of the tales contained in the collection are doubtless of an older *origin*, and many of them founded upon very old traditions or legends; that he does not regard the work as original or as the first of its kind, and that many of the tales which it contains are doubtless of very different and early origins. In truth, nearly all the materials of some of them, and especially of that Arabic Odyssey the Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor, were probably current in parts of Persia, in Arabia, and in Egypt, in the ninth century of the Christian era, if not much earlier.

The tale which the lively and inventive Greek received from the imaginative Arab was not likely to lose any of its marvellous properties in the Greek's translation and transmission. From narrations like these Homer drew many of his notions, both historical and geographical. The Ethiopia of the Father of Poetry is a region with limits very different from those of the regions that were afterwards classed under that name. In Homer it is a remote and mysterious and awful region extending all across the Southern Seas; and in whose centre the earth-shaking Neptune holds his court.

“Neptune, tremendous o’er the boundless main!
Rever’d and awful ev’n in heaven’s abodes,
Ancient and great! a god above the gods!” *

* Pope’s Version of the Odyssey.

It is from Ethiopia that Neptune strides when he has work to perform, and it is to that ever happy clime that he returns when his work is over. We have the testimony of Strabo to prove that all those nations were accounted Ethiopians by the early Greeks who lived upon the Southern Ocean from east to west. Somewhere within these limits lived the wisest and justest of mankind, the favourite of the gods, in a most happy clime, where the inclemency of the seasons and grief and woe were never known.

After Homer, as before his time, the Greek mariners continued to frequent "the Jove-descended Nile;" and curious travellers and philosophers in search of knowledge took the same course, to drink in wisdom as at a fountain head. These Greeks visited Egypt and some of the countries beyond it—

"Wandering from clime to clime, observant stray'd,
Their manners noted and their states survey'd."

Herodotus, the Father of History, who flourished about four centuries after the Father of epic poetry, and four centuries and a half before the birth of Christ, was, for his time, a very great traveller. He visited and examined Egypt from the coast of the Mediterranean to Elephantine on the Nile, the southern extremities of the country, and he travelled westward at least as far as Cyrene. In Asia he visited Tyre, Babylon, Ecbatana, and probably Susa. He also visited various parts of Asia Minor, where colonies of Greeks were very numerous, and in one of which he was born, and he probably went as far as Colchis. In Europe he visited a large part of the country along the Black Sea, between the mouths of the Danube and the Crimea, and

went some distance into the interior. He is believed to have examined the line of the march of Xerxes from the Hellespont into Attica. His writings prove him to have been well acquainted with Athens, Delphi, Dodona, Olympia, Thasos, Delos, and numerous other places in Greece. It is also clear from his work that he had visited some parts of South Italy, or Magna Græcia. These extensive travels seem to have been undertaken solely in pursuit of knowledge. "So wide and varied a field of observation," says a recent writer, "has rarely been presented to a traveller, and still more rarely to any historian, either of ancient or modern times; and if we cannot affirm that the author undertook his travels with a view to collect materials for his great work, a supposition which is far from improbable, it is certain that without such advantages he could never have written it, and that his travels must have suggested much inquiry, and supplied many valuable facts which afterwards found a place in his History." *

Four intervening centuries had not done much in clearing up the great mystery of the remote East. To Herodotus the historian, as to Homer the poet, Æthiopia was still the land of stupendous fable, and the easternmost parts of it the abode of gods, and of men made more perfect, and of longer life, than the rest of human beings. It is the extremity of the habitable world: it produces gold in vast quantities; elephants with their prodigious tusks; rich trees and shrubs of all kinds, as well as ebony; its inhabitants are as remarkable for the size as for the beauty of their persons. They ge-

* Penny Cyclopædia, article Herodotus.

nerally live to the age of one hundred and twenty years, and often exceed even that lengthened period. Their longevity and great personal beauty are in part attributable to a certain fountain, by bathing in which their bodies become shining as if anointed with oil, and diffuse the perfume of violets. This water is of so insubstantial a nature that neither wood nor any material still lighter than wood can float on its surface. Copper is the rarest of all the metals; gold is so common that it is employed for the meanest purposes.* Homer knew that the vast country he designated as *Æthiopia* was inhabited by two different species or races of men, both black, yet both perfectly distinguishable from each other; and he places these two races at the opposite extremities, or one in the east and one in the west. These Eastern Ethiopians were nothing but our Indians, the Western our African negroes. The poet, however, does not mark the characteristic difference between the two races, of straight soft hair, and rough and woolly hair. This, however, is the first circumstance that occurred to Herodotus. "The Oriental *Æthiopians*," he says, "have their hair straight; those of the West have their hair more crisp and curling than any other men."† A few other notions of the distinctive people inhabiting India and its neighbourhood were collected by our illustrious traveller and historian. We may trace in the description of Herodotus three sorts of natives in the East, corresponding with the three different peoples that seem to have inhabited the country in all ages. He describes the *Padæi* on

* Herodotus, book iii., *Thalia*.

† Book vii., *Polymnia*,

the north, who are a savage people resembling the tribes which are still in the northern mountains of India. He describes a second race living far to the south, who abstain from all animal food, and under this description we trace the real Hindus. He has a third race inhabiting Pactyra and Caspatyrus, who resemble the Bactrians in their manners, dress, and arms, who are subject to Persia, and pay their tribute in gold.

"And these," says Dean Vincent, "whether we can discover Caspatyrus or not, are evidently the same as those tribes which inhabit at the sources west of the Indus; who never were Hindus, but possess a wild mountainous country, where their fastnesses qualify them for a predatory life, and where they were equally formidable to Alexander, to Timur, and Nadir Shah: they resemble to this day the Bactrians, as much as in the time of Herodotus, or rather the Afghans in their neighbourhood, and are as brave as the one and as ferocious as the other."*

But in other matters connected with the remote East, the slight geographical notices he received from Persians or Arabs and Egyptians, are erroneous. If he had crossed the Indus himself, and had travelled through Hindustan, we should, no doubt, have had a description admirable for its conciseness and general accuracy. Whatever he describes on his own knowledge or from his own examination is strikingly correct. We have ourselves traced his footsteps in some parts of Asia Minor and Greece, and can testify to the fidelity of his descriptions. But where he merely repeats the tales that were told to him by others, his nar-

* Navigation of the Ancients, &c., Preliminary Disquisitions.

rative is almost as open to doubt and cavil as the Voyages of Sindbad or the Travels of Sir John Mandeville. Like Homer, but in remoter places, Herodotus has his giants and his pigmies, his men with only one eye placed in the middle of the forehead, and his griffins that are guardians of the gold. He describes people living at the foot of some lofty mountains beyond Scythia who are all hermaphrodites, and said to be bald from their birth, having large chins and nostrils like the ape species. And he says that these strange people assert that the mountains behind them are inhabited by men who in their lower parts resemble a goat; and that beyond these dwell a race that sleep away six months of the year. As to the half-goat people and the long sleepers he expresses a doubt, but he seems to entertain none touching the existence of the hermaphrodites with great chins and monkey noses. He has a whole nation of Anthropophagi, or man-eaters, and another nation that out of filial piety and devotion make their own stomachs the tomb of their fathers and mothers. Among the Issedones, he says, when the father of a family dies, his children and relatives provide some cattle; these they kill, and having cut them in pieces, they dismember also the body of the deceased, and, mixing the whole together, feast on it: only the head of the father is preserved; from this they carefully remove the hair, and then, cleansing the head thoroughly, they set the skull in gold, ever afterwards holding it as sacred, and producing it in their solemn annual sacrifices. This appears to be the origin of a tale which is found in Sir John Mandeville and in nearly all of our early travellers in the East. Herodotus also

appears to have been the first to disseminate in Europe that sublime fabulous creation the phoenix, or to have been the first to give a detailed description of the bird.

"There is also," says he in his account of Egypt, "another sacred bird, the name of which is the phoenix. I have not myself seen it, except in a picture, for it seldom visits them—only (as the people of Heliopolis say) every five hundred years; and they say that he only comes when his sire dies; and he is, if he is like his picture, of size and shape as follows:—part of his plumage is gold-coloured, and part crimson; and he is for the most part very like to the eagle in outline and bulk. And this bird, they say, devotes as follows; but they say what is to me beyond belief; that, setting out from Arabia, he brings his sire to the Temple of the Sun; that he covers him with myrrh, and buries him in the Temple of the Sun; and that he conveys him thus:—first, he forms an egg of myrrh as large as he is able to bear, and afterwards tries whether he can carry it; and when he has made the trial, he hollows out the egg, and puts his sire into it, and covers with other myrrh that part of the egg where he had made the hole and put in his sire; and when his sire lies inside, the weight [of the egg] is the same [as it was before it was hollowed out]; and having covered him up, he conveys him to Egypt unto the Temple of the Sun. Such are the things which they say this bird performs."*

The winged serpents, which make such a figure in Oriental stories and in the narratives of some of our early travellers, also flit through the pages of the Father of History.

Between sixty and seventy years after Herodotus, Ctesias took the field as a traveller and historian. He was a Greek physician, who was either carried

* Book ii. cap. 73.

away prisoner, or was impelled by curiosity and the love of adventure and gain to travel into Persia, an empire which was then of immense extent; including many countries which were soon after discovered from it, and reaching as far to the East as Bokhara and Cabul, if not still farther. This Ctesias became physician to the great Persian monarch Artaxerxes Mnemon, who preferred the Greek practice to the Egyptian, and liberally rewarded the professors of the healing art. To this class of men the world has been at all times indebted for large contributions to geography and other sciences. Their profession has been a passport and protection to them, and physicians have been enabled to penetrate into many places strictly closed to all but them. Ctesias remained a long while with Artaxerxes, and it seems probable that he travelled with that active sovereign in Persia proper and in some other kingdoms and provinces, although he might never have reached India or any of the countries lying on its borders. Among several books which he afterwards composed was one on Indian history. Unhappily none of his works have been preserved entire, and his writings are only known through the abridgments of Photius, and some fragments inserted in Diodorus, Ælian, and one or two other ancient writers. Photius, who furnishes the main staple, was born in the early part of the ninth century of our era, of a patrician family of Constantinople. His learning was very extensive, and his critical judgment remarkably good for the age in which he lived. But it was a superstitious and credulous age, and one in which the study of the natural sciences had rather retrograded than advanced from the con-

dition in which it was in the classical times of Greece. It is perhaps scarcely fair to judge of Ctesias as a traveller and describer of natural objects from an abbreviator like Photius, or from the fragments preserved by the more classical writers. Altogether they are but disjointed passages, which seem not even to have been given in his own words. Photius, as Dean Vincent observes, seems to have passed over all that he said of Indian manners, and to have preserved only his tales of the marvellous.* Yet, even as given by this editor, that part of the work which relates to Persia is for the greater part sober and correct. With regard to India, Ctesias appears to have taken sculptured symbols for the representation of real existing creatures: he not only describes pignies, which, as well as giants, had an undoubted existence in nearly all ages, but he also gives detailed accounts of men with the heads of dogs and feet reversed, griffins of portentous size and fierceness, and four-footed birds as big as wolves; and all these monsters of the imagination are still found represented on the walls of the pagodas or temples; they are symbols of the Hindu mythology; the Bramins pointed them out to the notice of the early visitors of India, and they became objects of natural history merely by transmission. Xenophon's spirited and admirable account of the expedition of Cyrus into Persia, and the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks, enlarged the knowledge the ancients had of many of the provinces and kingdoms composing the vast Persian empire; but it threw no additional light upon India.

* Preliminary Disquisitions.

"Ctesias," says Dean Vincent, "is contemporary with Xenophon, and Xenophon is prior to Alexander by about seventy years, during all which period little intelligence concerning India was brought into Greece; and if the Macedonian conquests had not penetrated beyond the Indus, it does not appear what other means might have occurred of dispelling the cloud of obscurity in which the Eastern world was enveloped."*

In the year* 327 before Christ, the victories of Alexander the Great had carried him as far as the city now called Candahar, in the Afghan territories. Here, as in other parts of the remote East, the memory of the Macedonian conqueror is still preserved among the ignorant inhabitants; and a molla, or Mohammedan priest, is accustomed to read in the public place or square the exploits of Iskander the Great. When the Macedonians continued their march from Candahar, they crossed the river of Cabul, and forced one of those mountain passes which have recently been the graves of so many ill-commanded Englishmen. Having wintered somewhere between the Cabul and the Indus, they crossed that great frontier river early in the year B.C. 326. From the left bank of the Indus it was the intention of Alexander to penetrate to the seat of empire, which was then, as it always has been, on the banks of the Ganges, or the Jumna. His route was the same as that which, at the distance of many centuries, was followed by Timour (Tamerlane) and Nadir Shah, whose immediate object was the plunder of Delhi, the Indian capital. Traversing the country of *the five rivers*—the Punjaub—and crossing the Hydaspes, he defeated in one great battle the powerful Indian

* Preliminary Disquisitions.

monarch Porus. From the Hydaspes the Macedonians advanced to the great Acesines, or *Chinab*, which they crossed in boats and on inflated skins or hides, the latter being a mode still common among the natives of those parts. From the Chinab they fought their way to the banks of the Hyphasis, and here was "the boundary of Alexander's conquests, and of that victorious progress to which no other history offers a parallel."*

More than two thousand years after this memorable halt of the Macedonian conqueror, General Lord Lake carried a small British army victoriously from Bengal to the Hyphasis, and halted on the opposite bank; and there the British standard waved majestically over those waters, and the British troops eyed themselves in the same clear mirror which had reflected the Macedonian phalanges.†

Having erected twelve massy altars as a memorial, Alexander turned back from the inauspicious gods of India, giving up his bold plan of a further advance, and commencing his retreat or return into Persia. Having sailed down the Indus to its confluence with the ocean, and having established a naval station and laid the foundation of a city at Pattala, probably Tatta, about sixty miles from the sea, he boldly resolved to send his fleet on a voyage along the coast towards the Persian Gulf, in order that he might increase his geographical knowledge, and settle the means of a great commercial intercourse between India and the people of the West. Nearchus, a very accomplished Greek, a native of

* Penny Cyclopædia, article Alexander.

† Major Thorn, *Memoir of the War in India conducted by General Lord Lake*. C. Mac Farlane, *Our Indian Empire*.

Crete (now Candia), was appointed to the command of this expedition. He kept a sort of log-book or journal, and afterwards wrote out an account of the whole voyage, which was incorporated in his own great work by Alexander's historian, Arrian.

Taking the nautical skill of the time for what it was worth, the Conqueror had many skilful mariners in his train. Among the multitude which had followed him in his progress to the East, the natives of Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Egypt formed a considerable body; and besides these there were Greeks from the Ægean islands, from Ionia, and the Hellespont, who were mariners as well as the Phœnicians; and out of all these Alexander selected such as were most used to the sea.* But the officers appointed to command the fleet were all, like Nearchus himself, of high rank in the army. Nearchus undertook, with the aid of the gods, to conduct both the men and fleet in safety to the Persian Gulf, provided he should find the sea navigable and the undertaking practicable to the power of man. These ships were undecked galleys and large row-boats: they were ill-suited to brave the storms of the ocean; but the absence of the mariner's compass, and the want of all knowledge of the properties of the magnetized needle, obliged them to hug the coast, and to make the Persian Gulf, not by sailing across, but by sailing round the head of the Indian seas. Although the men embarked in this new and daring expedition had great confidence in the skill and conduct of Nearchus, their fears, or their feelings of

* The Voyage of Nearchus and the Periplus of the Erythræan Sea.

awe, were also great. To propitiate the gods, Neptune and Jupiter the preserver, sacrifices were offered, and splendid games performed, upon the shore near the mouth of the Indus.

“In the Indian Ocean,” says Nearchus, correctly describing the monsoon, of which hitherto the Greeks had known nothing, “there is a regular wind which sets upon the coast during the whole summer season; and while that prevails, there is no navigation [to the westward]. It was in this season that Alexander had reached the delta of the Indus; but, upon the change of this wind, the voyage commenced, in the archonship of Céphissodôrus, and in the eleventh year of Alexander’s reign, according to the computation of the Macedonians and the people of Asia.”*

As soon as the monsoon ended, or in the beginning of October, B.C. 326, the fleet took its departure. After getting clear of the mouths of the Indus, the first place Nearchus reached in the Indian Ocean was the place now called Curatchee, or Crotchey Bay. The fleet seldom made more than thirty miles in a day, and did not often make so much. It does not consist with our present purpose to follow it in its slow progress from port to port, from cape to cape, or from promontory to promontory. We need merely note some of the romantic or marvellous incidents of the voyage—the greatest voyage which had hitherto been performed by Europeans. As they rowed along the coast, nearly everything was new and to them marvellous. Accustomed to the tideless Mediterranean, they were astonished by the mighty tides of the Indian

* The Voyage of Nearchus and the Periplus of the Erythræan Sea.

Ocean. At times the violence of the winds and tides stranded them on the coast, and kept them there for many days. At the place which Nearehus called Sangada, and which is now called Chilney, the ships' companies were landed, and a camp was formed and fortified with a rampart of stones as a defence against the wild natives. Their distress was great, and they had to endure it for four and twenty days, during which they had only brackish water to drink, and little to eat except oysters, cockles, and another species of shellfish, much larger than any they had ever seen in their own seas. At other places on the coast they were attacked by the natives, who carried lances stoutly made, and nine feet long, not pointed with iron, but hardened in the fire, and very sharp. After a sharp action of this kind, when the Greeks examined the prisoners they had made, they found that their bodies were covered with hair, that their nails were like the claws of wild beasts, that they made use of their nails instead of knives, and that their clothing consisted of the skins of beasts or of the larger kind of fish. At one part of the coast they found a nation of Ichthyophagi, or fish-eaters, who ate hardly anything else; and a little beyond this they found a country where the sheep were fed upon fish, there being no grass on that land. The Phœnicians and Greeks found this mutton detestable, being very fishy, like the flesh of sea-fowl.

The seamen were astonished, and the oars dropped from their hands, upon seeing some enormous whales sporting in the water and blowing it up from their nostrils. They had never before seen these huge monsters of the deep, which afterwards, in their

recitals, they made as much larger than whales as whales were larger than the biggest fish they had previously been acquainted with. . . But the magnitude of the creatures they really saw gave them an alarm that was not soon or easily dispelled. At last Nearchus ran up through the fleet with his own ship, and, as he passed, directed the commanders to form a line with the heads of their ships towards the monsters, as if they were going to engage them; at the same time ordering the people to raise the war-shout, to exert their strength to the utmost, and to dash the waves violently with their oars. Upon this the mariners recovered from their alarm, and advanced upon the signal, as to an actual engagement.

"And now, at the moment when they were close to the enemy, the clamour of the crews was carried to its highest pitch, the trumpets sounded the charge, and the dashing of the oars resounded on every side: upon this the monsters seen ahead plunged into the deep as if frightened by the attack, and rising again astern of the fleet, continued to blow as magnificently as before. The danger was past; the seamen shouted and clapped their hands upon their unexpected deliverance, and the judgment of Nearchus was as much their admiration as his fortitude."

"Some of those whales," continues the captain or admiral of Alexander's fleet, "are often left dry on the reflux of the tide, and some are driven on shore by storms. In this state they lie and putrefy till the flesh separates from the bones, which the natives employ in building their houses. Those taken out of the sides serve for beams and rafters, and the smaller ones for planks; those in the jaws are flat, and adapted to doors. The animal itself is often found nearly 150 feet long."*

* Voyage of Nearchus, &c., as translated by Dean Vincent.

Diodorus seems to have thought the sea-battle with the whales to have been almost the only part of Nearchus's wondrous voyage that was worth preserving; and thus was it afterwards and before—the marvels of old writers were preserved and exaggerated, the other parts of their relations thrown aside as tame and uninteresting. This became so much the fashion, that in the dark monkish ages men had no taste for the description of any race of human beings that wore their heads on their shoulders, or of any animal or created thing that was not a monster.

While passing the coasts of the Ichthyophagi the Greeks were told of a desert island, at a hundred stadia from the shore, which no ship or human being could approach near unto without being for ever lost.

“The natives said the island was sacred to the Sun, and was called Nosala [the modern Ashtola], a spot which no one dared to visit; for those who had attempted it were heard of no more. While Nearchus was near this place, a barque manned by Egyptians disappeared, and the native pilots on board the fleet maintained that it must have been lost by approaching too near this island. Nearchus, however, despatched a galley to the spot, with orders not to land, but to sail close round, and shout the name of the commander or the Egyptian officers. This was done without effect, and at last Nearchus went in person to the place, where he landed himself, and compelled his people, much against their will, to land likewise; and, in short, he exploded the whole as an idle tale.”

But this explosion did not in reality destroy the ancient fable; nor did the safe return of Nearchus and his Greeks put an end to the story among the people dwelling in the islands of the Indian Ocean,

that none could visit the awful isle, and return from it alive. Ashtola, slightly modified, reappears in the voyages of Sindbad of the Sea; and before those Arabian tales were known in Europe, more than one old Portuguese navigator told nearly the same story about this island which the Ichthyophagi had told to Nearchus and his Greeks and Egyptians and Phœnicians.

But Nearchus has yet more about this perilous island.

“There was another tale of mythology relating to the same place; for the tradition was, that this island was the residence of a Nereid, whose name, indeed, was unknown, but whose practice was to seduce such mariners as landed there to her embraces, and then, after transforming them into fish, to throw them into the sea. The Sun was offended at this treachery, and ordered the nymph to find herself some other residence: with this command, she said, she was ready to comply, or if not, she had no power to resist. Upon her submission, the god was satisfied; and then, taking compassion on those who had suffered by her enchantment, transformed them back again from fishes into men. This was the origin of the Ichthyophagi, and their descendants continued to inhabit the same coast to the time of Alexander.”

Arrian, the more sober and more modern historian, is quite angry with Nearchus for wasting his time and misapplying his talents in the refutation of such idle fables. But the fable of the Nereid is altogether Homeric; and whether it took some of its colouring from the Greeks who followed Nearchus, and who were well acquainted with Homer and his mythology, or whether Nearchus tells the tale as it had existed in the East in the remotest times, it is certain that the story, or something very like it, survived Nearchus, and was

repeated by natives of the Indian Ocean, who had never heard of the name of Homer, to our earliest European navigators in those parts, who assuredly had never read the *Odyssey*. Change fish into swine, and we have the Circe of the blind old Father of epic poetry. Nearchus and his Greeks, when they landed on the island, found neither their lost companions nor the Nereid. But, at a comparatively recent date, Captain Blair says he was warned by the natives of Passence that it would be in the highest degree dangerous to approach the island of Ashtola, as it was enchanted, and a ship had been there turned into a rock. The captain, however, went to the island, and saw plenty of turtle—as likewise a white rock, which, seen from a distance, bore some resemblance to a ship under sail. The transmuted ship may remind the reader of the *Odyssey* of the fate of the vessel of good Alcinous which bore Ulysses from Phœacia to Ithaca, and which is turned into a rock by the enraged Neptune.

“ Swift as a swallow sweeps the liquid way,
The winged pinnace shot along the sea;
The god arrests her with a sudden stroke,
And roots her down an everlasting rock.”*

Nearchus and his companions, after doubling a great cape, came to a country they called Karmania, a country abounding with corn and fruit and pasture, well wooded and watered; and thence after several days' sailing or rowing, and after doubling a high rocky promontory, which is supposed to be the modern Cape Passence, they reached a safe harbour called Mosarna, a little to the west of the

* *Odyssey*, book xiii., Pope's version.

aforesaid rocky promontory. They caught a distant view of another vast promontory, which they were informed was part of Arabia. They were likewise informed that from the ports in its neighbourhood cinnamon and spices were conveyed into Assyria and Persia. This, as Dean Vincent has observed, is a plain proof that the Arabs from Muscat and other places on that coast were already in possession of some trade with India; that is, they went to India for the spices and carried them up the gulf of Persia, and by the Euphrates to Babylon. From Babylon these articles were passed by caravans to the shores of the Mediterranean.* These Arabs had no doubt been traders with the East for spices in the days of the Pharaoh's, when the Egyptians mummified their dead.

At Mosarna Nearchus procured a pilot who undertook to conduct the fleet to the Persian Gulf. The delays were long, and the dangers of the voyage many, but at last the fleet arrived at the mouth of the river Anamis; in the country near Ormus. Here they were received with great hospitality by the natives, and found everything in plenty except the olive—that savoury and nutritious fruit which was most highly prized by the Greeks and Phœnicians. Some of the crews wandered from the shore up into the country, to gratify their curiosity, or to see what was to be found. These stragglers met a man who was dressed like a Greek, and who spoke the Greek language. Such was their surprise, after all their dangers and long voyaging, to see a Greek and to hear the sounds of their own language, that they wept for joy.

* Note to Translation of Voyage of Nearchus.

When they had inquired of this stranger whence he came, their joy was mingled with wonder and greatly augmented by his reply. He was a wanderer from the Macedonian camp, and the great Alexander with his army had marched safely through all the barbarian countries that lay between the Indus and the Persian Gulf, and was at no great distance. Then shouted the Greek mariners, and then, clapping their hands, they ran back to their fleet on the shore and told the glad tidings to Nearchus. On the very next morning Nearchus ordered all his ships to be drawn on shore, that some of them might undergo necessary repairs, and that the crews of all of them might find repose, refreshment, and relaxation on terra firma. And when, like the cautious captain that he was, he had formed a camp, enclosing it with a double palisade and a rampart of earth, and carrying a trench from the river to the sea, and had thus secured ships and men from any hostile attack, the bold Cretan set out in search of his ever victorious and beloved master. The distance was greater than he anticipated, and he could find no guide to lead him by the direct road. At last Nearchus and his not numerous escort fell in with a party from the Macedonian camp. These Greeks did not recognise their countrymen, so completely disfigured were they by their tattered dresses, their wild, neglected hair, their emaciated bodies, their wan and weather-beaten countenances, whereon were exhibited the signs of their past anxieties, sufferings, and distress. To their inquiries where Alexander was, they barely mentioned the place of his encampment, and were passing on without further notice. But one of the Cretan's officers

held them in further parley, and upon being asked whither they were going, or of whom they were in search, they replied, "We are in search of Nearchus, and sent by Alexander to inquire about the fleet."—"I am Nearchus, replied the weather-beaten much-enduring man, "I am Nearchus; lead me to the king."

Instantly some of the party from the Macedonian camp ran back to it with all their speed, and told the king that Nearchus with his officer Archias and five attendants were coming; but of the success or failure of the great enterprise in navigation these men had made no inquiry, and had therefore nothing to report to the anxious ear of the king. Alexander concluded that Nearchus and a handful of his people might have had a miraculous escape, but that all the rest of that expedition must have perished with the fleet. Anon Nearchus and Archias arrived in his presence, but they were so wasted and disfigured that he could scarcely recognise them. Their forlorn appearance confirmed his suspicion that the fleet had perished.

Yet the king held out his hand to Nearchus, and taking him aside from the party and from his guards, he continued for some time to shed tears without uttering one word: but at length recovering himself from his anguish, he said,

"Nearchus, I feel some satisfaction in the preservation of yourself and Archias, as a diminution of the affliction I feel for the calamity that has befallen my fleet. But tell me how and by what misfortune my ships and my people have been lost." "Sir," said Nearchus, "your ships and your people are all in safety, and we are come up as bearers of the glad tidings." The king now wept more abundantly, the more their preservation was unexpected, and then inquired where

the fleet was secured. "At the mouth of the Anamis," replied the admiral, "the ships are all drawn on shore and repairing." "I swear to you," rejoined the king, "by the Libyan Ammon and by the Jupiter of the Greeks, that I have greater pleasure in the success of this enterprise than in the reduction of all Asia to my power. For if my fleet had perished, I should have considered it as an overbalance to all the good fortune which has attended me."*

After remaining a few days with Alexander, Nearchus returned to the fleet. His journey was attended by fresh perils, for some of the people of the country were in open rebellion against their Macedonian conquerors, and attacked him twice or three times in one day. Having reached his fleet and sacrificed to Jupiter the preserver, and celebrated games which were at once gymnastic and religious, Nearchus again set sail about the beginning of the year B.C. 325. In ascending the Persian Gulf three of his ships grounded during a storm, but they got off as the tide rose and the storm ceased, and joined the fleet. As they went prosperously on, they reached an island where they found pleasant inhabitants and a fishery for pearls, "like that in the Indian Ocean." In a bay still farther up the gulf (probably the modern Nabend) they saw many trading ships lying at anchor, and found themselves surrounded by villages, and a fair country abounding with palm-trees as well as with other fruit-bearing trees, which resembled those of Greece, their own dear country. Many dangerous shoals yet lay between him and the point of his final destination, but Nearchus procured skilful and honest Persian pilots, and by

* Voyage of Nearchus, as translated by Dean Vincent.

their aid, and the exercise of an incessant diligence on his own part, he reached his port in the river Pasitigris—now the Karoon—on or about the 24th of February, B.C. 325. On the banks of this river he again met Alexander and his army, who were then on their march from Persepolis to Susa. The adventurous fleet cast anchor close to a bridge of boats which the king had constructed to pass the river.

“And here the naval forces joined the army; and here the sacrifices were repeated for the preservation of the fleet, and those who had embarked in it. Wherever Nearchus appeared, garlands and flowers were showered upon him, and crowns of gold were bestowed upon him for the execution of his commission. . . . Thus WAS THE FLEET OF ALEXANDER CONDUCTED IN SAFETY FROM THE INDUS TO ITS DESTINATION.”*

It was a glorious voyage and undertaken for a glorious object—the extension of commerce and the easier intercourse of distant nations and races of men. Alexander had boasted that he would open the world to men, and in various means he did much before his premature death to realize this grand scheme. The veil which had covered India was at least in part withdrawn. He and the Macedonians of his army had obtained a practical knowledge of the Indus, and some good hearsay knowledge of the Ganges; they learned where the centre and real seat of the empire was; they acquired intelligence of all the grand and leading features of Indian manners, policy, and religion; they discovered all this in their pursuit of conquests, and by penetrating through sterile or difficult countries where, in all probability, no Greek, no

* Dean Vincent's translation.

European had previously set his foot ; and they explored the passage by sea, which first opened the commercial intercourse with India and the countries beyond it to the Greeks and Romans through the medium of Egypt and the Red Sea.* For many ages but very slight additions were made to the information obtained by these Greeks. The voyage of Nearchus from the Indus to the Euphrates is to be considered as the first grand authenticated event in the history of navigation ; and his own well-preserved narrative of it, considering the time, the novelty of most of the scenes, and the lively and exaggerative imagination common to his race, is wonderfully free from romance and fable. If other writers of a later period, as well Romans as Greeks, magnified his adventures, and invented things and incidents for him, it was no fault of the honest old Cretan voyager, whom the great Alexander embraced with tears of joy, and honoured above all men.

Megasthenes and Onesicritus were generally regarded, even by the ancients, as fabulists, or as men that made full use of the traveller's privilege to draw the long bow ; yet many of their imputed falsehoods have become truths, as our knowledge of the countries of the East has been enlarged by modern enterprise and science. Seleucus Nicator, one of the great Greek captains who divided among them the great heritage or empire left by Alexander, having subdued Bactria and other countries between Persia and India, despatched Megasthenes as his ambassador to the great Indian monarch,

* Dean Vincent, Preliminary Disquisition to Account of the Navigation of the Ancients. Dr. Robertson, Disquisition on Ancient India.

called by the Greeks Sandroecottus, whose capital was at Palibothra, at the junction of the Saone and the Ganges. Megasthenes resided several years at this renowned city, in the very heart of Hindustan. He had ample means of obtaining information, together with the habit of literary composition. The book he wrote upon India has unfortunately perished, and is now only known through extracts given by Strabo, Arrian, and Ælian. He is not, in fairness, to be judged by these disjointed passages. It appears from them that he repeated the tales of Ctesias about the pigmies and some other monsters. But the belief in the—

Pigmean race

—— beyond the Indian mount *

was indestructible; and some foundation perhaps might be found among the Bheels or other diminutive, half-famished, degraded races that have dwelt at all times, and that still dwell, in parts of the hill country of Hindustan. But even the fragments of Megasthenes convey a very faithful representation of the Indian character and Indian manners; they show him to have been the first writer who spoke with precision on these points.

Onesicritus of Egina went with the Macedonian army to the East, and was sent by Alexander on an embassy to the Indian Gymnosophists. He appears to have penetrated far into the country, and to have resided some time among the Bramins or Hindu priests. From his own travels, or from the reports of natives, he obtained some knowledge of the Malabar coast and the great island of Ceylon. He was the first to mention that island under its

* Milton.

ancient and long-preserved name of Taprobane, and he assigned to it dimensions more correct than those that were given to it by Ptolemy four hundred years after, and when fleets had annually been going thither from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.

Eratosthenes, who was librarian of Alexandria, and who died at an advanced age (B.C. 194), was rather an astronomer and mathematician than a geographer or a traveller. But he systematised the writings or accounts of others who had travelled, and he was the first astronomer who measured a degree of a great circle, and drew the first parallel of latitude. Hence he was called the surveyor or measurer of the earth, and upon his sublime attempt all the accuracy of the science depends.* Agatharchides, president of the Alexandrian library, who flourished about the same time, collected, and apparently without visiting those countries, much information concerning the nations or peoples who dwelt on either shore of the Red Sea, the waves of which were now annually ploughed by trading ships going to or returning from India, and still more frequently by the ships that traded in elephants and ivory, and that crossed the sea from the Abyssinian to the Arabian coast. By his means the country now called Abyssinia was made more accurately known, and more substantial notions were conveyed of a portion of the vast regions which Homer and the early Greeks had included within the limits of Ethiopia. "His work," says Dean Vincent, "contains many peculiar truths confirmed by modern experience, and the first genuine characteristics of Abyssinia that occur in history."

* Dean Vincent, Preliminary Disquisitions.

He describes the gold-mines on the coast of the Red Sea ; the process or manner of working them ; the sufferings of the miners ; and the mining tools of *copper* found in the mines, and supposed to have been used by the Egyptians in the days of the Pharaohs, or prior to the Persian conquests.* In Meroe, or Abyssinia, he describes the hunting of elephants, and the practice of hamstringing them ; and also the national custom of cutting the meat or flesh out of the live animal. It was in relating this last custom that the veracity of our Abyssinian Bruce was most cavilled at. It is to be noted that Agatharchides does not specify the flesh from living oxen, but elephants. But the people who cut steaks out of live elephants, might very well cut them out of live oxen, and Bruce's assertion that they do so has been amply confirmed. In Abyssinia Agatharchides also describes the fly which Bruce mentions as the scourge of that country ; he mentions the use of locusts as food ; the Troglodytes as described by Bruce ; the rhinoceros, the camelopard or giraffe, the fierce and obscene hyena, and other animals and other objects of natural history that were afterwards seen in the country, and described by our heroic searcher after the sources of the Nile. In some particulars there is the common and almost unavoidable tincture of the fabulous. But as the sagacious, accomplished, and right-minded Dean Vincent observes —

“ Great moderation is due in judging of writers who speak of a country in the first instance. Things are not

* At the close of the last century mining tools were found in some of the mines in Ireland, which were supposed to be Phœnician ; and others have been found in mines in Wales, which are certainly Roman.

false because they are strange, and an example occurs in this author which ought to set rash judgment on its guard. Agatharchides mentions the worm which is engendered in the legs, and is wound out by degrees. Plutarch ridicules the assertion, and says it never has happened, and never will. In our days every mariner in the Red Sea can vouch the truth of the fact; and if Plutarch had lived to be acquainted with our illustrious Bruce, he would have shown him that he carried with him the marks and effects of this attack to the grave."*

But this worm is found in other countries besides Abyssinia and the shores of the Red Sea. That most worthy mariner, Robert Knox, found it in the forests and jungles of Ceylon, and suffered from its attacks; and more than a hundred years after his time, when our troops invaded Kandy, in the interior of that island, they were fearfully tormented by the worm in their legs and feet.

It is to Agatharchides we are indebted for the most picturesque and striking, and, in the main, most correct picture of Sabæa, or Arabia Felix, as that country flourished when it possessed the key to the commerce of India, and stood as the intermediate depôt between Egypt and the East. It is evident that he had never visited the country, for he mentions among its natural productions commodities which were only imported into it from the Indian ocean. His Sabæa answers generally to the modern Yemen in Arabia. A more glowing picture has seldom been painted of the effects and fruits of a well established and extensive commerce:—

"Sabæa," says Agatharchides, "abounds with every production to make life happy in the extreme; its very air is so perfumed with odours that the natives are

* Preliminary Disquisitions.

obliged to mitigate the fragrance by scents that have an opposite tendency, as if nature could not support even pleasure in the extreme. Myrrh, frankincense, balsam, cinnamon, and cassia are here produced from trees of extraordinary magnitude. . . . The people are robust, warlike, and able mariners; they sail in very large vessels to the country where the odoriferous commodities are produced; they plant colonies there, and import from thence the *larimna*, an odour nowhere else to be found; in fact there is no nation upon earth so wealthy as the *Gerrhêi* and *Sabêi*, as being in the centre of all the commerce which passes between Asia and Europe. These are the nations which have enriched the Syria of Ptolemy; these are the nations that furnish the most profitable agencies to the industry of the Phœnicians, and a variety of advantages which are incalculable. They possess themselves every profusion of luxury, in articles of plate and sculpture, in furniture of beds, tripods, and other household embellishments, far superior in degree to anything that is seen in Europe. Their expense of living rivals the magnificence of princes. Their houses are decorated with pillars glistening with gold and silver. Their doors are crowned with vases and beset with jewels; the interior of their houses corresponds to the beauty of their outward appearance, and all the riches of other countries are here exhibited in a variety of profusion.”*

Yet Agatharchides, who had at his disposal all the Greek learning accumulated by the Ptolemies in the magnificent library of Alexandria, and who from his position may be supposed to have had access to all the sources of information that were then open, seems to have known very little of the coast of Africa beyond Cape Guardafui, and to have entertained very incorrect notions of the ocean into which the Red Sea opens. As soon as

* Agatharchides, as freely rendered by Dean Vincent.

he steps farther east than Sabæa he gets into the marvellous—the waters of the sea become white like those of a river; Fortunate Islands raise their heads, having no flocks or herds upon them but such as are white; the sun no longer rises like a disk but like a column, and it casts no shadow until it is a full hour above the horizon. And, except where he copies Nearchus, the far continent and islands of India become very vapoury and indistinct under the hand of Agatharchides. Diodorus, Strabo, Pliny, Pomponius Mela, and Ptolemy, derived most of their information from Agatharchides: where he was right they went right, and where he related fables they did the same. Pliny, who died A.D. 79, had indeed some more ample information concerning the Ganges, for he names six different mouths of that river, and describes their positions. But beyond the Ganges Pliny's geography is nearly all wrong.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN the Roman conquerors became masters of Egypt, Phœnicia, and Syria, they continued to receive the commodities of the East as they had been received for ages, making for a long time no very strenuous effort to acquire any knowledge of the remote countries from which those productions originally came. The geographical knowledge of the East was indeed stationary. Virgil, as a poet, did little more than follow and adorn Homer; to him, as to Homer, the measureless ocean or far-resounding sea was the Mediterranean, although the Atlantic was then pretty well known from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Straits of Dover, and above the Mediterranean Straits as far as Cape Non; and although the Romans had in books, copied from the Greek travellers and geographers, a notion of the wide seas which spread between the coasts of Arabia and Persia and those of India, the marvellous incidents of the voyage of Ulysses are nearly all repeated in the voyage of Æneas. They had become stock matter in poetry.

As the conquerors of the world became more and more luxurious under the Imperial Cæsars, there was a vastly increased consumption of the productions of the East. The spices and aromatics of the Indian ocean seem to have been considered as the natural productions of Sabæa, or Arabia the happy, which was only the entrepôt. At the funeral of Poppæa, Nero consumed so prodigious a quantity

of cinnamon and aromatics as filled the Roman citizens with astonishment. That insane emperor was anxious to know more of the country which produced these precious things; but, although Pliny says he sent two centurions from Egypt into the interior of Ethiopia, we are not informed that he sent any one to India.

At a date which is somewhat uncertain, but which has been assumed by Dean Vincent as having been during the reign of the Emperor Claudius, or about the year 47 of the Christian era, Hippalus, the commander of a trading-vessel in the Red Sea, was encouraged to trust himself to the steady blowing of the monsoon wind, and, instead of coasting, to sail right across the ocean from Arabia to India. The periodical changes of these winds, and their constancy in blowing several months from one quarter, had been noticed by Nearchus, and must have been known at all times as well to the Arabian as to the Indian mariners. But a lucky accident is generally considered as having animated Hippalus. A few years before, as a freedman of Annus Plocamus was in the act of collecting tribute to the Romans on the coast of Sabæa, he was carried out to sea, and wafted by the monsoon right across the Indian ocean to the island of Taprobane or Ceylon. He was there kindly treated, and the king of Taprobane furnished him with a vessel of more commodious size than that in which he had unexpectedly made his voyage across the ocean. The king sent also four ambassadors with the freedman to the Roman emperor, and a rajah or chief to manage the vessel. There appears to be no rational doubt that both the vessel and the crew were Indians, and that these Indians, trusting to

the changed monsoon, which now blew as steadily towards the Arabian coast as it had previously done towards the coast of Ceylon and Malabar, steered their course direct for the mouth of the Red Sea. The voyage of Hippalus, both outward and homeward, was thoroughly successful; the steadiness of the winds was found to render unnecessary the sight of coasts, capes, and promontories, and the other in-shore aids of which the timid mariner availed himself before the sure guidance of the compass; and he could not but report favourably of the ease and comfort of such a navigation. By the Romans and their Greek dependants at least the successful experiment of Hippalus was hailed as a great discovery, which could greatly facilitate and extend the commerce of the East. To perpetuate his fame his name was given to the wind which had wafted him to India. It is supposed that the Indian port he made was either that of *Mauris* or that of *Barace*; these are two harbours, not far apart, on the Malabar coasts, supposed by the eminent Indian geographer, Major Rennell, to lie between Goa and Tellicherry, and to be probably represented by the modern Meerzaw and Barcelore. These two ports were the principal staple of the trade between Egypt and India when that trade was most flourishing.* These traders and navigators, however, seem to have done but little to add to the stock of knowledge concerning India and the countries to the east of it. The fabulous parts of the narratives of Ctesias and of the officers of Alexander the Great continued to be repeated even by writers of the greatest learning. Other

* Dr. Robertson, *Historical Disquisition concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India, &c.*

fables were superadded, as well about India as about Ethiopia; and although among the refined and luxurious Romans there was a growing incredulity as to other matters, there appears to have been no decrease of faith as to the existence of monsters in the human shape. Nearly all the marvels in which Sir John Mandeville and others dealt so largely are to be found in the great work of Pliny. Pliny has a whole chapter on "the manifold, strange, and wonderful forms and shapes of men." Not satisfied with flattening the Negro nose, he cuts it off altogether. Speaking of Ethiopia he says—

"Certes, reported it is, that far within the country, eastward, there are a kind of people without any nose at all on their faces, having their visage all plain and flat. Others again, without upper lips, and some tongueless. . . . Furthermore, writers there be who have reported, that in the country near unto the meres and marshes from whence Nilus issueth, there is ~~in~~ those little dwarfs called pignies."*

Pliny is somewhat censorious upon old Bion for telling fabulous and incredible tales about a people called Nigræ, whose king hath never more than one eye, and that in the midst of the forehead, like the Polyphemus of Homer; about the Agriophagi, who live mostly on the flesh of lions and panthers; about the Pomphagi, who eat all things whatsoever; about the Anthropophagi, that eat only man's

* We are using the rough good old English translation which was familiar to Shakspeare and to the reading world of England in his time. This is the full title of the venerable folio: 'The Historie of the World, commonly called the Naturall Historie of C. Plinius Secundus. Translated into English by Philemon Holland, Doctor in Physicke. London, printed by Adam Islip, 1601.'

flesh; and about the Cynamolgi, who have heads like dogs. Yet after these censures Pliny could record tales to the full as fabulous and incredible as these of Bion. The great snake or boa constrictor of India took a great hold upon his imagination. In speaking of elephants, he says—

“ But India bringeth forth the biggest, as also the biggest dragons (serpents), that are continually at variance with them, and evermore fighting, and of such greatness are they, that they can easily clasp and wind round about the elephants, and withal tie them fast with a knot. . . . In Ethiopia there be as great dragons bred as in India, to wit, twenty cubits long. It is reported, that upon their coasts they wrap themselves four or five of them together, one within another, like to a hurdle or lattice work, and thus pass the seas, to find better pasturage in Arabia, cutting the waves, and bearing up their heads aloft, which serve them instead of sails.”

These huge navigating snakes may be found the type or the counterpart of the great sea-serpent which occurs so frequently in Eastern Tales, and which is still seen off the coasts of the Western world, almost as often as the editor of a United States newspaper is pinched for news or for matter wherewith to fill his columns.

Of the existence of the phoenix, or of that of the unconsumable salamander, Pliny appears to have had no doubt. He describes the salamander as being made in fashion like a lizard, being marked with spots like stars. He adds that it is “ of so cold complexion, that if it do but touch the fire it will quench it as presently as if ice were put into it.” He considered it his duty as a natural historian to describe mermaids and mermen, nereids and tritons. He had nearly as good as heard, with

his own ears, a triton "blow his wreathed horn;" for there was an official account of a living one carried to Rome when he was a young man, and when Tiberius was emperor. In the same passage he speaks of the incontrovertible existence of mermaids or sea-nymphs.

"In the time of Tiberius the emperor, there came unto him an ambassador from Ulyssipon, sent of purpose to make relation, that upon their sea-coast there was discovered within a certain hole, a certain sea-goblin called Triton, sounding a shell like a trumpet or cornet; and that he was in form and shape like those that are commonly painted for Tritons. And as for the mermaids, called Nereids, it is no fabulous tale that goeth of them: for look how painters draw them; so they are, indeed, only their body is rough and scaled all over, even in those parts wherein they resemble a woman. For such a mermaid was seen and beheld plainly upon the same coast, near to the shore; and the inhabitants dwelling near, heard it afar off, when it was a dying, to hear a piteous moan, crying and chattering very heavily.

If during the time when the Roman power was at its highest, little information was imported into Europe concerning India, still less was brought home about China, the country which produced the silk which was in so general a demand among the wealthy and luxurious. This precious commodity was conveyed from China to India by sea; and from the Malabar coast, or from the island of Ceylon, it was conveyed across the Indian Ocean to Arabia and Egypt. After the successful experiment of Hippalus, it is probable that the voyage from India was generally direct to the Red Sea, though it should appear that some vessels con-

tinued to make a coasting voyage of it, and to land their cargoes in the Persian Gulf. Whichever way it came, the price of silk was so enormous that none but the richest could purchase it. For several centuries after the use of it had become common among the wealthiest, the Romans had no certain knowledge either of the countries to which they were indebted for it, or of the manner in which it was produced. It was supposed by some to be a fine down adhering to the leaves of certain trees or flowers; by others, to be a delicate species of wool or cotton; and even those who had learned it was the product of an insect, had no distinct idea of the nature of that insect, or of the manner in which the silk was formed.* Following the Macedonian Greeks, the Romans called the country of production *Serica*, or the land of silk, or they called it the country of the *Seres* or silk-people. ~~Ma~~il seems to have thought that this remote people had no other occupation than that of carding the silk from leaves; and Dionysius Periegetes, who wrote in the same Augustan age, limited their labours to their gathering of silk and preparing it to be manufactured into pieces. Thus—

“Nor flocks nor herds the distant *Seres* tend;
But from the flow’rs that in the desert bloom,
Tinctur’d with every varying hue, they cull
The glossy down, and card it for the loom.”

Pausanias, the learned Greek who established himself at Rome about the year 170 of the Christian era, had a nearer glimpse of the truth. “The *Seres*,” he says, “have a *spinning* insect, which is

* Dr. Robertson, *Historical Disquisition concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India, &c.*

kept in buildings, and produces a fine spun thread, which is wrapped about its feet."* But it was not until the sixth century, and long after the division and decline of the Roman empire, that the mystery which involved this interesting subject was fully cleared up. This great and sad period of decline was most fruitful in the production of fable and exaggerated legend. It has been too much the fashion to tax the early Christians and the first monkish writers with having originated this world of fiction, which began before the monks, and which took a marvellous growth and increase from the writings of men who were neither Christians nor friends to the new faith. There is scarcely to be found a thicker constellation or milky-way of fabulæ than exists in the *Life of the sophist Apollonius of Tyana*, as written by Philostratus. It has been doubted whether such a man as this Apollonius ever lived; but there is no doubt that the romantical biographer Philostratus flourished about A.D. 200, and that he wrote his book in Greek, by order, and from the information, of Julia Domna, wife to the Emperor Septimius Severus—the unconverted wife of a pagan lord. The fanciful biography bears nearly everywhere proof of its having been written in a spirit hostile to Christianity, which was rapidly on the increase in most parts of the Roman empire. Two of the principal objects held in view should appear to have been—1. To describe Apollonius of Tyana as a greater traveller than Herodotus or Nearchus, or any of the Greeks. 2. To set off his conjurings and magical performances against the miracles

* See Penny Cyclopædia, article Silk.

related in the New Testament of our Saviour and his apostles. Philostratus himself admits that he *embellished* the materials placed in his hand by the Empress Julia. The Emperor Severus, to use the words of Gibbon, "was passionately addicted to the vain studies of magic and divination, was deeply versed in the interpretations of dreams and omens, and perfectly acquainted with the science of judicial astrology." In a book written for the court of such an emperor, Philostratus thought there could hardly be too much magic. Besides, he was himself a passionate admirer of the Pythagorean philosophy, preferring the doctrine of the metempsychosis to our Saviour's simple enunciation of the immortality of the soul. He takes up the story of his hero before he was born, making Proteus appear to his mother to tell her that she was about to be delivered of him, the god Proteus himself. Swans—not waiting for their own dying hour—sing in chorus at the miraculous birth. Other marvels follow in rapid succession, the life of Apollonius being one continued and highly-wrought miracle. All philosophies, all wisdom, divine as well as human, are intuitive to him; yet he travels the wide world in search of wisdom, as the knight-errants at a later period journeyed in search of adventures and good fighting. He performed more cures than the all-healing Esculapius himself had ever done. He lived solely upon fruits and herbs, avoiding in his dress every article of animal substance, and he walked barefoot, and let his hair and beard grow. Having finished his studies among the maritime cities of the Greeks in Asia Minor, he travelled by land to India, crossed the Indus, and feasted with a great Indian

king, who was also a very great philosopher. During his journey towards India he had a very distinct view on Mount Caucasus of the chains which had bound Prometheus to the rock. But this was nothing to the things he saw beyond the Indus. There he found a woman consecrated to Venus, who was jet black from the head to the chest, and of a charming whiteness from the chest to the feet. Some of the Indians hunted dragons or serpents of the most prodigious dimensions, by magic, and Apollonius joined in the sport. The eyes and scales of these dragons shone like fire, and acted as talismans upon those who were not initiated in magic. He saw a fearful animal with the head of a man and the body of a lion, with a tail from which bristles grew of the length of a cubit, all as sharp as prickles, which it shot forth like so many arrows against its pursuers; he saw fountains of golden water; men who ever dwelt below the ground, griffins, the phoenix, the precious stone pantarhas, which threw out rays of fire, and attracted unto itself all other precious stones. Returning from India into Asia Minor, he visited the plains of Troy, conversed at the grave or tumulus of Achilles with the ghost of that hero, who, as he found, "still loved conversation." At Ephesus he stayed a plague which was raging by bidding the people throw stones upon an old man who was begging; and when the men of Ephesus removed the stones they had thrown, they found beneath not a dead old man, but a dead dog, as large as the fiercest lion. Passing over to European Greece, Apollonius was worshipped as a god at Athens and other cities. After visiting Crete, and astonishing other countries with his magical

performances, he went to Rome, where the Emperor Nero was then reigning. He was followed thither by a host of converts. The Roman magistrate became jealous of his power, or suspicious of his intentions; but he removed their mistrust by restoring to life the dead body of a noble lady, and by uttering predictions which were immediately fulfilled. Quitting Rome, he visited the south of Italy, Sicily, and Africa. After a flit back to Athens—which was far easier work to him than it could have been to the owner of the seven-league boots—he plumped down into Egypt, travelled into Ethiopia, and went in search of the sources of the Nile. The biographer or maker, Philostratus, shows his wit or cunning by never once hinting that Apollonius discovered those undiscoverable fountains; but the book gives something like a description of the cataracts of the Nile, which had been visited long before this by a Roman army. At a village in Ethiopia, near to the cataracts, he found the women all running away from an abominable satyr. He caught and killed this obscene monster by pouring wine into a fountain. “By Jupiter,” exclaims the biographer, “this is the action of Apollonius which gave the greatest lustre to his travels, and which was in truth his greatest feat. No doubt can now remain of the existence of satyrs and of their amorous propensities.” When Titus had captured Jerusalem, Apollonius wrote him a very short letter to recommend moderation. Titus invited him to an interview, and embraced him in public. Other journeys almost as extensive, and miracles quite as extraordinary, were performed, according to Philostratus, by this god-man.

"Concerning the manner of his death," says the biographer, "*if he did die*, various are the accounts. Dāmīs, the Assyrian, says not a word of it. But as I wish to have my history complete, I cannot pass it over in total silence. . . . Some say he died at Ephesus, waited on by two handmaids. . . . Some say he entered the temple of Minerva, at Lindus, and there disappeared. Others affirm his exit was made at Crete in a still more extraordinary way. During his stay in Crete, it is said, he possessed greater authority, and was more admired than he ever was before, and used to enter the temple of Diana at unseasonable hours of the night. This temple was under the protection of dogs, who took care of the riches laid up in it. These dogs were supposed by the Cretans to be of a breed not inferior to that of bears, or other wild beasts. Whenever Apollonius entered the temple these fierce dogs did not bark at him, but received him with fawning affection. The priests who had the care of the temple seeing this, seized him one night at his entrance, and bound him, as if he were not only a magician but a robber, saying he had given the dogs a sop to tame them. About midnight he freed himself from his chains, and called those who had bound him, to show he did nothing in secret; and then running to the gates of the temple, he found them open. As soon as he entered them, the gates shut of themselves as they had been before, and the temple resounded with the singing of many virgins, the burden of whose song was, 'Leave the earth, come to heaven—come, come.' "

And, according to this veracious biographer, his magician or conjuror went straight to heaven without tasting of the pangs of death.*

Philostratus had various followers and imitators, but none appear to have drawn the long bow with

* The Life of Apollonius of Tyana, translated from the Greek of Philostratus; with notes and illustrations; by the Rev. Edward Berwick. London, 1809.

so much vigour, and with half his serious self-possession. Perhaps the writer who came nearest to him was the celebrated Neo-Platonist Jamblichus, a native of Calchis, in Cælo Syria, and who flourished in the fourth century, or about a little more than a century and a half after Philostratus. When the Emperor Julian, commonly called the Apostate, decreed that the Christian religion should be no more, and that the outworn creed or mythology of the classic ages should be revived, Jamblichus greatly recommended himself to his favour, and to the notice of his pagan court. He was styled "the divine," "the most divine teacher," "the wonderful." He undertook to defend the old religion of the empire, and to write a life of Pythagoras, which should prove the Samian sage to have led a divine life, and to have been in the possession of the divine secrets. In working out this end he turned Pythagoras (who merited a better treatment) into a mighty conjuror or magician like Apollonius of Tyana. The leading motive in both cases appears to have been the same—to outshine the miracles and manifestations narrated in the Christian Gospel. The Neo-Platonism of these declining times was far unlike the pure Platonism of the truly classical ages. It was mixed and corrupted by Oriental systems, theories, and speculations, some of which may have had their origin in ancient Persia, in Assyria, and in other countries which the Romans had subdued, while others are to be traced to India or even to Thibet—to Bramins and Bonzes, and the priests of the Delhi Lama—although the mode in which these ideas were transmitted is matter of doubt and discussion. The writings of Jamblichus

are permeated with these Oriental essences. Portions of them read like a piece of Hindu mythology, and other portions like an Oriental tale. He believed, or professed to believe, in magic, and in all manner of miraculous gifts, and that these gifts were attainable by any man who would practise self-denial, and lead a life of rigid ascetism. Such was the life reported to be led by the Gymnosophists of India, and of which a rude and partly delusive imitation is offered even in our own days by the fakirs, dervishes, and santons of the East—for the Koran and sword of Mohammed, powerful as they were, could never eradicate these superstitions. Spirits, good and evil, visible and invisible, genii and jinns flit through the pages of Jamblichus, and they have all the stamp of the remote East upon them. Legends are still extant in which Jamblichus is described as exercising authority over all these spirits, and compelling them to do whatever he wishes. If not during his life, at least after his death he was considered as a magician as potent as Apollonius, or as his own Pythagoras.

Although they may not have been derived immediately from those sources, but may have been picked up from popular and wide-spreading traditions, many of the most extravagant notions or hearsay reports of our old travellers may be found in the writings of Jamblichus and in the notable book of Philostratus. There was a stock, and a gradually accumulating capital of these ideas; and from this stock the first framers of the Arabian tales and Persian fables may have helped themselves very largely without any necessity of making fresh importations from the Indian Ocean or the

countries beyond it. Some such importation was, however, inevitable when the Arabs and Persians, in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, enlarged their trade and extended their intercourse with the remotest east.

If faith is to be placed in the ancient Chinese annalists, and in the correctness of their modern European translators, An-toun, or the Emperor Marcus Antoninus sent an embassy to the Emperor Oun-ti, who was reigning over China, A.D. 166. But if this embassy really went, and reached the Celestial Empire, its members seem to have brought back no information concerning the country or its inhabitants.

So soon as the Christian religion was firmly established in the west, on the ruins of Paganism and Neo-Platonism, missionaries of the Gospel began to find their way across the Indian Ocean. Their course was not difficult. The Egyptians, and particularly the people of the Thebais, were distinguished by their enthusiastic zeal for the faith they had embraced: churches and monasteries were built in the desert, Christian colonies were established on either side of the Red Sea, and the great seaports which traded with India were filled with Christians, and ruled by Christian magistrates. In many instances merchants, ship-masters, and crews must all have been converts, and, as such, anxious to disseminate the Gospel. Some of these Arabians had already formed considerable settlements in Ceylon and in various places on the Malabar coast. If a zealous monk put himself on board a Christian ship in the Red Sea, he might be sure of respect and kind treatment on his voyage, and of a welcome at the end of it from countrymen and co-

religionists. It should seem that the only rational way of accounting for the prodigious number of Christians that were found by our early travellers settled in India, is to assume that an emigration in that direction began early, and was continued through a considerable period of time. Some of these early missionaries returned to the countries of their birth, and must have brought back with them much useful information ; but the west was sinking deeper and deeper into anarchy and barbarism, and if these travelled monks put their observations upon record, their MSS. perished in the conflagration or general combustion which followed. In the sixth century, in the time of the Emperor Justinian, when the eagle of Rome had become little better than a carrion crow, the hostile Persians, by stopping caravans by land, and ships by sea, succeeded in obtaining an almost entire monopoly of the trade in silk. The price of that commodity in Europe again rose to a prodigious height, and at times silk could hardly be obtained at any price whatever. At this juncture two Nestorian monks and missionaries, whose names have been allowed to perish, but who must have been courageous and intelligent and far-reaching travellers, as they had penetrated into China, and had safely returned thence, waited upon Justinian at Constantinople, explained to him the whole and long-enduring mystery of the silk-worm, and offered to return to China, and bring him back a supply of the invaluable insects. The emperor encouraged them by gifts and splendid promises. The monks made their journey, re-entered China, deceived that jealous and vigilant people by concealing the eggs of the silk-worm in a hollow cane,

and returned successfully and triumphantly to Justinian. The climate of the south-east of Europe was soon found to be very favourable to the Chinese insects. Under the direction of the two monks the eggs were hatched in the proper season by means of artificial heat: the worms were fed with mulberry leaves; a sufficient number of butterflies were saved to propagate the race, and trees were planted to supply an abundance of the food which best suited the worms.* The monks also taught the subjects of Justinian the art of manufacturing silk, as they had seen it practised by the Chinese. In the course of a few years silk enough was produced in Greece and the Greek islands to supply the demand of the Roman Empire, and the silken robes and stuffs which were woven were considered as not at all inferior to the best of those which had formerly been imported from the East. But perhaps these very circumstances contributed to render an incurious age more and more indifferent to great geographical questions, or at least to the subject of the vast empire beyond India.

Yet during the reign of the same Emperor Justinian some additions to the knowledge of India were procured by one Cosmas, an Egyptian merchant, who made several voyages to that country. Growing weary of his trading, wandering life, and following the bias of his times, he turned monk, and shut himself up in an Egyptian monastery. There he wrote a strange book entitled *Christian Topo-*

* Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xi. Our historian has closely followed the contemporary or nearly contemporary authorities. As usual with him, he has ornamented their periods, but he has not misrepresented or overstrained their facts.

graphy, to beat back all the advances which had been made in astronomy and geography, and to prove that the world was an oblong plain, twelve thousand miles long by six thousand broad; that it was surrounded by high walls, and covered by the firmament as with a canopy; that the vicissitudes of day and night were caused by a mountain of prodigious height, round which the sun moved, &c.* But if Cosmas, as a monk, was no great philosopher, he had been, as a merchant and traveller, a tolerably good observer. He had seen a good deal of India, and he mentioned several things relating to it which had not hitherto been told. He describes the marvellous increase of the trade of the Persians with that country, and the great number and extent of the Christian settlements on the coast. In nearly every city of any note that he visits in India he finds Christian churches, in which the functions of religion are performed by priests ordained by the Nestorian Archbishop of Seleucia, then the capital of the Persian Empire. He also describes the island of Taprobane, or Ceylon, as being the grand depôt, or entrepôt, where the Persian merchants discharged their cargoes and took in fresh ones. The eastern manufactures and productions were brought to Ceylon by Chinese, Malay, Indian, and other shipping. It may be reasonably doubted whether these correct descriptions had half the charm for his contemporaries that they found in his incorrect and absurd geography.

* Abstract of the *Cosmography of Cosmas*, as given by Dr. Robertson in *Historical Disquisition*, &c.

CHAPTER III.

BUT a more energetic people than the enslaved and degenerate subjects of the Roman Empire were now about to take the field, and to aspire not only to the dominion of the East, but to a sovereignty over the whole inhabitable globe. Towards the close of A.D. 570, or five years after the death of the Emperor Justinian, a woman of the noble tribe of Koreish—the most enterprising and commercial as well as the most noble of all the Arab tribes—gave birth, in the city of Mecca, to a remarkable son, who changed the faith of his country and the religions of a vast portion of the eastern world. In his youth and early manhood Mohammed was a great traveller and a great trader. His journeys were principally directed towards Syria and to the fairs of Damascus. In his twentieth year he took part in an expedition against the predatory tribes which then molested the caravans and pilgrims on their way to Mecca—the holy city of the great Arab family many centuries before the promulgation of the Koran. In his fortieth year he began to assume the prophetic office, and to display his views and principles to his own domestic circle. But it was not until A.D. 622, or fifty-seven years after the death of Justinian, that the citizens of Medina welcomed the persecuted and banished prophet, invested him with the regal and sacerdotal office, and took up the spear and yataghan to propagate the doctrines he taught. The sword once

drawn was never sheathed until the pagan tribes of all Arabia and the adjacent countries had joined in the concise profession of faith, that there was no God but God, and that Mohammed was his prophet. By the ninth year of the Hejra, or flight to Medina, from which the Mohammedans date their era, the conquests of the prophet had extended over nearly the whole of Syria and Palestine, and ambassadors had been sent to Heraclius, the Constantinopolitan emperor, and to the king of Abyssinia, to threaten them with war and invasion if they did not forthwith embrace the profession of Islam. In the course of the following year, A.D. 632, the prophet died, in the sixty-third year of his age. But the new fire he had kindled in the bold Arabian heart did not die with him. His successors and their enthusiastic followers pursued the course he had marked out for them, and soon carried the Koran and the Yataghan into remote regions which he had never thought of, and of some of which he had probably no knowledge. These first Arabian Mohammedans were cruel conquerors, but were not harsh taskmasters to the subdued peoples when their conquests were secured. They encouraged trade, and allowed their rayah subjects, whether Christians, Jews, or Gentiles, to share in its benefits. Many of them were descendants of the Sabæans of Agatharchides, who had so long held in their hands the commerce of the far East. The prophet himself had been a merchant, and before he closed his career as a conqueror and an envoy of the Omnipotent, he had decreed that his conquered subjects should have protection and security and freedom of trade; that their religions should be tolerated, and that no-

thing should be wrung from them but a moderate annual tribute. The crushing taxes, the tolls, the enormous port duties and transit duties, the multiplied lines of custom-houses and fiscal barriers, the vile monopolies which had been a curse to the subjects of the declining Roman Empire, and which had mainly contributed to bring about the ruin and annihilation of that mighty power, were swept away almost entirely. They find no place in the Koran, which was at once the sole guide of faith and the sole code of laws to these Arabs. By the letter of that book, commerce was left as free as air. The trader and prophet of Mecca anticipated twelve hundred years ago the grand theory of our modern political economists.

The trade with India from Persia and from Egypt was now prosecuted with a new vigour, and was soon greatly enlarged. Shortly after the complete subjugation of Persia, the Caliph Omar, the second in succession after the Prophet, founded the great and far-famed city of Bassora, on the west bank of the Shatt-el-Arab river, which flows with a copious stream and in a deep bed to the Persian Gulf. It was the intention of the Caliph to make this place the port and mart of the whole Indian trade; and such it speedily became, and for many ages continued to be. Under the name of Basra, or el-Basrah, it is continually mentioned by the Mohammedan writers of the middle ages. It was to this city that the merchants and navigators resorted when they were about to try their fortunes in the Indian Ocean. It was as famed in romance as in history and geography. It is the starting point of Sindbad of the Sea at each of his seven marvellous

voyages. He goes as regularly from Bagdad to Bassora, thence to try his fortune among—

Robbers at land and pirates on the main,
Enchanters foil'd, spells broken, giants slain,*

as Prince Eugene of Savoy went from Vienna to the Netherlands to join the Duke of Marlborough and fight the French.† Sindbad never has to wait for a ship; let his love of adventure and emprise come upon him when it will, he is sure to find an Indian-bound ship ready for him at Bassora.

As the trade from the Persian Gulf increased, many Mohammedan colonies or factories were established beyond the Indian Ocean; and this trade and these settlements—the very first factory or colony having been established at Calicut on the Malabar coast—were gradually extended until they reached the coast of Coromandel, the Sircars, the mouths of the Ganges and the innermost parts of the Bay of Bengal, the Arracan coast, Pegu, Siam, Malacca, Sumatra, Cambodia, Cochin China, Tonquin, and even China itself. All this was certainly done before the middle of the ninth century of our era. The settlers took their Imaums or priests with them, and mosques were built in many places in India, Ceylon, Siam, and onward to the Celestial Empire. Some of the traders ascended the Irawaddi and established factories within the territories which now constitute the Burmese empire or kingdom of Ava. Traces of these estab-

* Crabbe: 'The Patron.'

† See the *jeu d'esprit* of the witty Marshal Prince de Ligne, called a *Life of Prince Eugene*, written by himself, which many have taken for an authentic piece of autobiography.

lishments are still to be found on the banks of the Irawaddi at Rangoon, Prome, and even as high as Amarapoora, nor have trading vessels from the Persian Gulf yet ceased to ascend that magnificent river.

We would not rashly question the decision of our great living Oriental scholars, that the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainment,' as we now possess them, are of a much more recent date than the ninth century; yet we are inclined to believe that many of their materials were collected in the course of that and the following age, when the enterprise of the Mohammedans was so great and their imaginations so susceptible, and when the excitement of novelty, which always leads to error or exaggeration, had not yet been weakened by usage and familiar intercourse. The wondrous tales of the returning merchants and mariners would be sure to be spread far and wide, and to gain ornaments and additions from those who took them up and repeated them by hearsay; and if we add these tales to the traditions which have been floating about Asia Minor and the eastern shores of the Mediterranean ever since the days of Homer, and probably long before his time, we shall have a stock sufficient not only to furnish the staple of the very Odyssean voyages of Sindbad, but also the principal elements of all those other Arabian tales. We shall frequently have occasion to notice the passionate fondness of the Arabians for marvellous tales and the recitals of travellers' adventures. In all ages there appear to have been among them itinerant professional story-tellers, resembling those men that still gain their daily bread by the same means in the coffee-houses of Cairo and Constantinople, and in the

Khans and caravanserais of Syria and Asia Minor. Long before the coming of their prophet Mohammed they had a great stock of tales and legends. Their fondness for them gave the prophet much trouble. The reading or hearing of these tales and fables so delighted them, that when Mohammed endeavoured to entertain the Arabs of Mecca and Medina with the history of the patriarchs and narratives taken out of the Old Bible, they despised his efforts, telling him that Nasser, the Arabian merchant, told them much more beautiful stories. For this the prophet cursed Nasser and all his disciples.* But whatever effect the curse may have produced upon the far-travelled tale-telling merchant, it evidently had none at all on the fondness of the Arabs for such reading or recital. As in modern times the reading of Robinson Crusoe has made many sailors, so these old tales must have sent many an Arab across the world of waters.

During the animated ninth century the Indian Ocean was traversed by two Mohammedan merchants of a very superior order, who wrote an account of their voyages.

A precious manuscript, being a copy of an earlier MS. (possibly that written by the two travellers themselves), was discovered about 125 years ago, in the library of M. le Comte de Seignelay, by the distinguished Orientalist M. Eusebius Renaudot. The antiquity of the MS. thus found was sufficiently denoted by the character in which it was written. There was, however, a still better proof of its great age, for the

* D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*; see also the Introduction to the translation of that grand Arabian epic *Antar*, by Terrick Hamilton, Esq.

copyist spoke of the Sultan Nouraddin as being alive at the time of his writing, and this sultan died A.D. 1173. Thus when M. Renaudot discovered it, the MS. must have been at least 550 years old. But the two travellers and authors of this relation must have been much more ancient, for they give their own dates to their voyages, the one 237 of the Hejra, which corresponds to A.D. 851, the other 254 of the Hejra, which corresponds with the year 877 of our era. They were thus 400 years older than Marco Polo.*

M. Renaudot published his translation at Paris in the year 1718. He admits, as every one must do, that the two voyages contain several things that are fabulous, and a great many more that are too obscure to be cleared up; and that the total absence of geographical positions not unfrequently prevents our clearly knowing what countries they are speaking about. But these defects, which are common to all who have written travels or geography in Arabic, are redeemed by a great number of curious things not to be found elsewhere. They point out the course pursued by the Arabs and Persians who sailed from Bassora, as also the navigation of the Chinese who met these Arabs at

* Renaudot, Introduction to his translation of the Voyages. We are aware that it has subsequently been stated that these travels are only part of a geographical and historical work entitled 'Meadows of Gold and Mines of Silver,' by the celebrated Masudi, an Arabian writer of the *tenth* century of our era. We cannot go into the discussion of this question; but we must say that we entirely disbelieve the theory. Masudi may very well have found the plain straightforward narration of the two merchants, and have inserted it with embellishments in his more than half fabulous book.

Sinaf. Father Martini and other savans who wrote before the publication of these two voyages, concluded that antecedently to the ninth century the Chinese navigated by the mariner's compass, that they traded direct with Ceylon, and established a colony there; and that they had imparted the use of the compass to the intelligent Arabs with whom they had frequent dealings. But the two Mohammedan merchants disprove the whole of this, and prove that in their time the Chinese had no knowledge of the mariner's compass, that their voyages were all coasting voyages, and that the Chinese never adventured to go beyond Sinaf or the strait of Singapore—denoting at the same time that they could not do so, as their ships were not capable of contending with the great waves and storms of the open sea.

Wherever our voyagers went—and they went as far as China—they found traders of their own faith and country, and in many places on the coast of the continent they found factories or colonies of Mohammedans. At Canfu, or Canton, which is described as the port of all the ships of the Arabs who traded to China, the followers of the prophet were so numerous that there was a Cadi or Mohammedan judge appointed by the emperor of China to decide in all civil causes that might arise among the Mohammedans. It is added that this Cadi publicly performed the services of his religion, and put up the usual prayer for the Caliph of the Moslem; and that the merchants of Irak or Persia who traded there were well satisfied with the conduct of this judge, as his decisions were just and equitable, and conformable to the Koran. All this proves that there must have been for a long

time a regular and progressive commerce between Arabia and the Persian Gulf and the Celestial Empire.

In crossing the Indian Ocean, water spouts are seen, and are not incorrectly described.

“ It often happens in these seas that a whitish cloud suddenly appears overhead, which lets down a long thin tongue or spout, quite to the surface of the water, which is then turned swiftly round, as if by a whirlwind, and if a vessel happens to be in the way, she is immediately swallowed up in the vortex. At length this cloud re-ascends, and discharges itself in prodigious rain ; but it is not known whether this water is sucked up by the clouds, or by what means this phenomenon is produced.”

They describe the voracious shark as frequently preying upon men. They visit the island of Ceylon, called by them Serendib—a name which it long retained among the Arabs, Persians, and Turks. Mixed with the fabulous and traditionary, there is much that is true in their account of the island. They describe it as the chief of all the islands in those parts, and as being of great extent. They say that the territory is divided between two kings ; and a division of this sort is known to have existed in Ceylon for many ages. They mention the pearl-fishery on the coasts, the abundance of wild elephants in the interior, and the gold, opals, rubies, and amethysts that are found on the island. They speak of the remarkable mountain called Adam's Peak, and give an Arabic turn to the gigantic Hindu legend connected with it, for they were probably the first to relate that Adam, having one foot on the sea, rested his other leg on the top of the peak [it is about 4000 feet high], and left the deep impress of that foot on the rock,

the said impress being seventy cubits long. They found a great many Jews and persons of many other religions and sects settled in the island, and in the enjoyment of the liberty of conscience. The state and magnificence of the greater king are described in much the same manner as in the sixth voyage of Sindbad. That loquacious mariner tells us how his majesty of Serendib was reminded during his lifetime that, great as he was, he must die. In our Mohammedan voyagers we are told what happens after his death.

“When a king dies in the island of Serendib, they lay his body on a car, in such a manner that his head hangs backward till it almost touches the ground, and his hair trails upon the earth; and this car is followed by a woman with a broom in her hand, therewith to sweep dust on the face of the deceased, while she cries out with a loud voice, ‘Oh, men! behold your king! He was yesterday your master, but now the dominion which he exercised over you is vanished. He is reduced to the state you now see; he hath left the world! The arbiter of life and death hath withdrawn his soul. Count not, therefore, oh man, upon the uncertain hopes of this life.’ When they burn the body of a king, it is usual for his wives to jump into the fire and burn along with him; but this they are not constrained to do. The same custom of burning the bodies of the dead prevails over all India.”

In this passage we have the description of a ceremony and proclamation strictly consistent with the narrative of Sindbad; and the passage must have been written centuries before the date now assigned by Orientalists to the production of the ‘Arabian Nights’ Entertainment.’

Several of the abounding vegetable productions of Ceylon are noticed by our two Mohammedans

without error or exaggeration ; and, although they are little given to picturesque description, the beauty of the country is spoken of with a feeling approaching to rapture.

“ Towards the end of this island are valleys of great length and breadth, which extend quite to the sea. There voyagers stay two months and more, allured by the beauty of the country, which is bedecked with trees and verdure, water and meads, and blessed with a most wholesome air.”

The few words that are said about the Andaman islands are perfectly true to this day. The inhabitants are described as ferocious cannibals, having black complexions, frizzled hair, frightful countenances and eyes, and very long feet,—in short, as occupying the lowest and most brutalized scale in human nature.

“ They have no sort of barks or other vessels, or they would seize and devour all the navigators and passengers they could lay their hands on. When ships are driven thither by contrary winds, or are obliged to anchor on this barbarous coast in order to procure water, they commonly lose some of their men.”

Beyond the Andamans is placed an inhabited mountainous island, which is said to contain inexhaustible mines of silver, but which lies out of the usual track of shipping, and is so difficult to find that many have sought for it in vain, although it has one very conspicuous landmark in a very lofty mountain called Cashenei.

“ A ship sailing in these seas once got sight of this mountain, and steered for the coast, where some people were landed to cut wood. The men kindled a fire, from which there ran out some melted silver, on seeing which they concluded that there must be a silver mine on the

spot; and they sought and succeeded in shipping a considerable quantity of ore; but they encountered a terrible storm on their voyage back, and were forced to throw all their ore overboard in order to lighten the vessel. There are many such islands in these seas, more in number than can be reckoned; some inaccessible to our seamen, and some unknown to them."

In another passage the islands existing in a part of the Indian Ocean are set down in round numbers at 1900. The old kings of the Maldives styled themselves "the Lord of Twelve Thousand Isles." As the Arab navigators had not the use of the mariner's compass, or the science of ascertaining correctly the latitude and longitude of a place, and as their maps and charts were of the vaguest kind, it would frequently happen that storms or other accidents would carry a ship to some rich or beautiful island which could not afterwards be found when expressly sought for. In this lies the key to half the adventures of Sindbad. When the mariner could say he had visited an island which was afterwards undiscoverable, he was free to describe the said island in his own way, and to place such monsters in it as he chose.

On the continent of India many things are described by the Mohammedan travellers much more correctly than had hitherto been done. In some cases their information was altogether new. The fakirs and their almost incredible doings, the pagodas and the licentiousness which reigned within them and around them are faithfully portrayed.

"In the Indies there are men who devote themselves to a wandering life, or to live in mountains, woods, and wilds, professing to despise what other men most value,

abstaining from everything but such wild herbs and fruits as are to be found in the woods. . . . Some of these go quite naked, or have only the skin of a leopard thrown over them, and they keep perpetually standing with their faces turned to the sun, never sitting down, or changing their position, or turning their eyes away from the dazzling luminary. I formerly saw one in that posture; and on my return to the Indies, sixteen years afterwards, I found him in the very same attitude, it being astonishing that he had not lost his sight by the heat and glare of the sun. . . . There are certain men called Bicar, who go all their lives naked, and suffer their hair to grow till it covers their hinder parts. They also allow their nails to grow, till they become pointed and sharp like swords. Each wears a cord round his neck, to which is suspended an earthen dish, and when hungry they go in to any house, and the inhabitants cheerfully supply them with boiled rice. They have many ceremonies and religious precepts, by which they imagine that they please the Almighty."

The suttee, or immolation of Hindu widows, is noticed, and they make a near approach to truth or to the existence of castes in describing the hereditary nature of all professions and occupations.

"In all these kingdoms the sovereign power resides in the royal family, without ever departing from it, and the heirs of the family follow each other in regular succession. In like manner there are families of learned men, families of physicians, and of all the artificers concerned in the various arts; and none of these are ever mixed with the family of a different profession."

They are the first to describe the use of tea as a beverage among the Chinese.

"The emperor reserves to himself the revenues which arise from the salt mines, and those which are derived from impositions upon a certain herb called tcha [tea was, for a long time, called ta or tcha], which they

drink with hot water, and of which vast quantities are sold in all the cities in China. This is produced from a shrub more bushy than the pomegranate tree, and of a more pleasant smell, but having a kind of a bitterish taste. The way of using this herb is to pour boiling water upon the leaves, *and the infusion cures all diseases.*"

Our Arabs mention the relief afforded to the Chinese people from the public granaries during famine or scarcity. They likewise mention the *bamboo* as the great governing instrument, or panacea in all matters of police. They describe very correctly the Chinese copper money; the light transparent and elegant Chinese porcelain; their wine made from rice, and other things never before mentioned. They speak with approbation of the maintenance of public teachers by government, in the towns, with something like contempt of the vaunted Chinese philosophy, and they mention the ignorance of astronomy, in which the Arabians were the first instructors of the Chinese. By connecting various disjointed sentences and paragraphs, we derive a consistent account of a very orderly and methodical government; but the voyagers lament that recent revolutions and troubles had greatly affected the prosperity of the country and the administration of justice. At the time of their visit the reigning dynasty of Tang, which was entirely overthrown a few years after, or in A.D. 897, was exceedingly degenerate and unpopular. Nearly the whole power of the state was usurped by the eunuchs of the palace. The mandarins of Canton are depicted as a rapacious, venal set of men, for ever interfering with the liberty of commerce, and maltreating the foreign merchants that

resorted to Canfu or Canton. "This city," they say, "stands on a great river, some days distant from the entrance, so that the water here is fresh." They tell us that after suffering many obstructions, long delays, and unjust dealings, the foreign merchants turned their backs on the extortionate mandarins, and left Canton to open a trade on another part of the coast.

The author of the best modern book upon China pays the following tribute to the relations of our two Mohammedans:—

"These bear internal evidences of truth and accuracy no less indisputable than those which distinguish the relations of the Venetian traveller Marco Polo; and as they have reference to a much earlier period than even his, must be considered to possess a very high degree of interest. We can perceive a remarkable identity between the Chinese, as they are therein described, and the same people as we know them at the present day, although a period of 1000 years, nearly, has since elapsed; nor can the occurrence of one or two very remarkable discrepancies be considered as any impugnement of the general veracity of these travellers, where there is, upon the whole, so much of sound and correct information. The contradictions have in fact evidently proceeded from some confusion in the original manuscripts, by which observations, that had reference to other countries lying in their route, and which are true of those countries at the present time, have become incorporated with the account of China itself."

Our two Arab merchants also collected some information about the empire of Japan, which is

* The Chinese: a general Description of China and its Inhabitants, by John Francis Davis, Esq., F.R.S., &c. &c., and now Governor and Superintendent of Trade in Hong-Kong.

scarcely less mysterious or less interesting than the Celestial empire. They call the country Zapage or Zapaye, a name closely resembling that given to it by Marco Polo and other early travellers. Of course there is some little admixture of the fabulous. This never fails whenever our old explorers, whether Mohammedans, Jews, or Christians, trust to hearsay reports.

“ The province of Zapage is opposite to China, and distant from thence a month’s sail or less, if the wind be fair. The king of this country is styled Mahrage, and his dominions are said to be 900 leagues in circumference, besides which, he commands over many islands which lie around; so that, altogether, this kingdom is above 1000 leagues in extent. One of these islands is called Serbeza, which is said to be 400 leagues in compass; another is called khami, which is 800 leagues round, and produces red-wood, camphor, and many other commodities. In the same kingdom is the island of Cala, which is on the passage between China and the country of the Arabs. This island is 80 leagues in circumference, and to it they bring all sorts of merchandize, as aloes, wood of several kinds, camphor, sandal-wood, ivory, the wood called cabahi, ebony, red-wood, all sorts of spice, and many others; and at present the trade is carried on between this island and that of Oman. The Mahrage is sovereign over all these islands; and that of Zapage, in which he resides, is extremely fertile, and so populous that the towns almost touch each other, no part of the land being uncultivated. The palace of the King or Mahrage stands on a river as broad as the Tigris at Bagdad or Basra, but the sea intercepts its course, and drives its waters back with the tide; yet during the ebb the fresh water flows out a good way into the sea. The river water is let into a small pond, close to the king’s palace, and every morning the master of the household brings an ingot of gold, wrought in a particular manner, and throws it into the pond, in presence

of the king. When the king dies, his successor causes all these ingots, which have been accumulating during the reign of his predecessor to be taken out; and the sums arising from this great quantity of gold are distributed among the royal household, in certain proportions, according to their respective ranks, and the surplus is given to the poor."

So long as the Arabs monopolized the trade of the East, the Greeks, in common with all the European nations, were almost entirely excluded from it. We believe, however, that there was hardly ever a time in which a few Christians did not find their way to India, if not to China, in Arabian ships from Bassora and the Persian Gulf. The Nestorian Christians on the Malabar coast would have lost their faith if it had not been kept alive by occasional importations of priests and teachers from the Christian community in Persia.

The conquests of the Arabs were checked, and eventually their civilisation was thrown back by the great conquering race of the Mongol Tartars. These two colossal powers, the terror of the world, were mortal foes to one another. The main strength of the Arabs or Saracens lay in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. But they had extended their conquests in other regions, reaching westward as far as the Atlantic Ocean: all the north of Africa obeyed them; they became masters of the richest provinces of Spain; they spread their fleets over the Mediterranean, occupying many of its islands, and menacing all its coasts: Arabia and the other regions which extend to the Euphrates were their own, or were entirely submissive to them; but at that frontier they were pressed upon by the Moguls, whose dominions extended from the Euphrates east-

ward over a measureless part of Asia; and terrible was the collision of two powers that could put in movement such prodigious numbers of men.* The power and splendour of the empire which the Arabian prophet had founded reached its greatest height during the latter part of the eighth and beginning of the ninth century of our era, under the Caliphs Manzur, Harun-al-Raschid and Mamun of the illustrious family of the Abbasides; and its decline may be dated from the commencement of the tenth century, when many Mohammedan dynasties sprang up in different parts of the empire, and shook off their allegiance to the common sovereign. Even within Bagdad the capital, and within the provinces that continued faithful, the authority of the Caliph was diminished by the power and influence gained by the Emir-al-Omrah, the commander of the Turkish body-guard, these Turks being a gross, turbulent, and brave people of Tartar origin. Although in the hands of the paynim, and sadly wasted and despoiled, Jerusalem, in the eyes of all the Christian world, continued to be the city of God, and Palestine the holiest of lands. Even while the Saracen's spear was yet dripping with the blood of conquest, pilgrimages were made by men who braved every danger in order to pray over the spots which the Saviour of mankind had sanctified by his presence. At the most flourishing period of the Caliphate, Charlemagne the emperor of the West concluded a friendly treaty with Harun-al-Raschid, and obtained permission to build an hospitium in Jerusalem for the accommodation

* M. Roux, Introduction to Ancient French Version of the Travels of Marco Polo, published by the Geographical Society of Paris, in *Recueil de Voyages*, &c.

of the Christian pilgrims. Other indulgences were also granted at the same time. By these means pilgrimages were made more frequent than they had been before. About the same time, or perhaps half a century earlier than Charlemagne, some of the maritime Italian Republics began to trade in spices, perfumes, and other commodities of the East. The Venetians and Amalfitans found their way to Candia, then to Egypt, then to Palestine; some ran up the Archipelago to the island of Scio, and to the always trading city of Smyrna; some adventured up the narrow straits of the Dardanelles, and across the Propontis or Sea of Marmora to Constantinople, to trade with the Greeks, and to purchase from them such Indian goods as were brought thither by caravans. As they soon found that there was more freedom of commerce allowed by the Saracens than by the Greeks, and a much greater facility for obtaining the merchandise of the East in Egypt and on the Syrian coast than at Constantinople or among the Greek islands, these adventurous Italians plied their chief commerce in the latter direction. From Italy, the country which contained the capital of the Christian world, frankincense and other aromatics used in churches found their way to the north of Europe, and even into our island. When the venerable Bede died in his monastery at Jarrow, he had little to leave behind him except the precious manuscripts which he had written himself or collected; but in that little was included a quantity of pepper, cinnamon, and incense, which he had carefully treasured in a chest, and which he had ordered to be divided among the priests of his house. This was in the year 735, or about seven years before the birth of Charlemagne.

At the commencement of the Carlovingian dynasty, Venice and Amalfi kept up the commercial intercourse of Christendom with the countries of the East, and this they alone continued to do until the time of the first crusade. Nearly at the same period the two small commercial states of Gaeta and Naples had gradually grown up to independence and consequence. These miniature republics, by cultivating trade, laid the foundation of other laws and rights than those of the devastating sword. At the close of the eighth century of our era squadrons or fleets of ships from the Adriatic, from the Gulf of Salerno, from the Bay of Naples, and from the sunny coast that lies between the mouths of the Tiber and the Liris, sailed annually to Acre and Tyre and the mouths of the Nile. Few of them went without having a complement of pilgrims on board; and some of these stray pilgrims, either through a combination of accidents, or out of an increasing passion for travel and adventure, may have been led down the Red Sea or to the Persian Gulf, and may there have embarked for India, and even for China. Not a few passages in the early monkish chronicles of Italy go to strengthen this conjecture, and to prove that in the darkest ages scraps of information concerning the remote East were brought by some such means into Europe, and there coloured and exaggerated.*

Our Saxon ancestors were quite as devout, and at one time as inquiring and as adventurous, as any

* Upon this subject much light has been collected and condensed by Count G. B. Baldelli Boni, in '*Storia delle Relazioni Vicendevoli dell' Europa e delle Asia dalla Decadenza di Roma fino alla Distruzione del Califfato.*' Florence, 1827, 2 vols. 4to.

other people in Europe. Alfred the Great was distinguished above all his contemporaries by a love for the science of Geography. The geographical work which he partly translated from Orosius, and which he partly wrote himself, is a remarkable monument of his industry, research, and genius. He endeavoured, by liberality and kindness, to attract to England all such foreigners as could give him geographical information. From Audher or Othere, who had coasted the continent of Europe from the Baltic to the North Cape, he obtained much information; from Wulfstan, who appears to have been one of his own subjects, and who undertook for him a voyage round the Baltic, he gathered many particulars concerning the divers countries situated on that sea; and from other voyagers and travellers he obtained descriptions of Bulgaria, Selavonia, Bohemia, and Germany. But he caused the East to be explored as well as the North. Having, by some means,* learned that there were colonies of Christians settled on the coast of Malabar, he resolved to send an embassy to them.

“In the year 883,” says the concise Saxon Chronicle, “Alfred sent Sighelm and Athelstan to Rome, and likewise to the shrine of St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew, in India, with the alms which he had vowed.”

* Alfred may very well have obtained this information from that celebrated Irish scholar and traveller Joannes Scotus, or Erigena, who is said to have been in Greece and in other parts of the Levant about the year 858, who had a thorough acquaintance with the Greek language, and who displayed a wonderful amount of information for the time he lived in. Such a man as Erigena could scarcely travel in any part of the East without getting some notice of the Christian colonies in India.

Succeeding chroniclers mention only the name of Sighelm. William of Malmesbury, that best and most spirited of monkish annalists, who wrote and died in the time of King Stephen, gives the story of his Indian mission in more detail. He relates it twice. In his *Gestis Pontificum Anglorum* he says—

“Sighelm being, for the performance of the king’s alms (*causa eleemosynarum Regis*), sent beyond sea, even to St. Thomas, in India, and going very prosperously, which a man would wonder at in this age, penetrated into India (*Indiam penetravit*); and returning thence, brought with him gems of an exotic kind, of which that soil is productive: and many of these gems are yet seen in the monuments of our churches.”

In his *Gestis Regum Anglorum* he says—

“King Alfred, being intent on benefiting the church, confirmed what his father had statuted, and sent many gifts beyond sea unto Rome and unto St. Thomas, in India. His legate in this business was Sighelm, bishop of Shireburn, who, with great prosperity (which is to be wondered at in our age), penetrated into India; whence returning, he brought with him exotic and splendid gems and aromatic liquors, of which that soil is very productive.”

Gibbon and other writers have cast doubt and discredit upon the whole story of this distant and in every way remarkable journey of the ninth century. The gorgeous historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire suspects that Alfred’s ambassador or ambassadors collected their cargo and the legend about St. Thomas, not in India, but in Egypt; and he remarks that Alfred did not enrich his Orosius with the account of this Indian voyage, although he does enrich it with the Scandinavian or Baltic voyage of Othere.

The silence of Alfred's instructor, friend, bosom companion, and biographer, Asser, has also been objected. Yet neither the silence of the King nor the silence of Asser can be taken as decisive evidence that Bishop Sighelm had not made the voyage. As far as it goes, the Saxon chronicle is the most plain, direct, and authentic of records; and William of Malmesbury rarely mentions any historical fact except upon good evidence. The incredulous seem to have greatly exaggerated the difficulties of such a voyage. Gibbon, who was one of the most timid and lazy of travellers, and who always found it surpassingly difficult to travel from London to Lausanne, was little qualified to estimate the spirit which animates a real traveller, and still less to feel the courage and fortitude inspired by an enthusiastic devotion. For many years after the establishment of Charlemagne's hospitium at Jerusalem, and the opening of the trade with Egypt and Palestine by the Venetians and Amalfitans, it was comparatively easy to reach these countries; once in Egypt, a short journey across the desert—to be made safely and even pleasantly with a caravan, wherein were Christians and traders of all sects—would take the traveller to the Red Sea, and to the port from which ships sailed every year for Ceylon and the coast of Malabar. On board ship he would find Christian merchants as well as Jews; and the Christian community was certainly numerous in Malabar before the time of Alfred and Sighelm. The envoy of a king, bearer of kingly presents to the shrine of the patron saint of all the Christians of India, would be sure of a friendly reception; and, his mission

being accomplished, an Arab keel and a favouring monsoon would waft him back to Arabia. We cling fondly to the romantic story of the good old Saxon bishop's Eastern voyage ; and we can see no difficulty in believing in it. The heart of man is more benefited by clearing up these legends than by rejecting them with a contemptuous incredulity.

There is a great deal of concurrent evidence to prove not only that there were many Christian and Jewish communities settled in India and China in the ninth century of our era, and down to the sixteenth century, but also that the Christians were numerous in both those countries long before the birth of Mohammed. A passage has been quoted from Chinese annalists to show that their country must have been visited by Europeans as early as the second century of our era, for it describes the arrival of strangers with fair complexions and light blue eyes. But apparently no mention is made of the religion of these strangers. The Jesuit writers upon China relate that some of the missionaries discovered, in the year 1625, at one of the principal cities of the province of Shensy, an inscription in Syriac characters, recording the first introduction of Christianity into China, in the year 635, by certain Nestorian bishops, who had been driven eastward by persecutions in the Roman provinces. In that same province of Shensy Marco Polo found the Christians to be very numerous at the time of his visit. The same traveller found a thriving Christian community in the neighbourhood of Nanking. Marco also met with Christians at Cashgar, at Samarcand, at Karkan or Yerken, at So-Cheu, at Kow-cheu, and in other places ; and

he nowhere speaks of their establishment as being of recent date.*

In the century after Alfred the Great, Gerbert or Gibert, a native of France, attained to a great but evil fame as a traveller, mathematician, and natural philosopher. He travelled into Spain in search of mathematical knowledge, and resided some time in that peninsula among the learned and ingenious Arabs, if he did not cross the seas to Egypt and Arabia. Returning after a lapse of years to his native country, and being enriched with all the science of the Arabs, he rose high in the favour and esteem of the French King Robert and of the Emperor Otho. He became Archbishop of Rheims, next Archbishop of Ravenna, and at last pope, under the name of Silvester II. As the name of his three sees all began with the letter R, the following barbaric verse was made:—

Transit ab R, Gerbertus ad R; post Papa viget R.*

But the vulgar set down his science as magic; and worse tales were told of this head of the Roman church than ever were related of Friar Bacon, Friar Bungay, or Dr. Faustus. Bishop Otho, who lived about a century after him, wrote seriously and solemnly that Gerbert had employed the most horrible of means to gratify his ambition, and that, being a poor simple monk, he quitted his monastery, travelled abroad among heathens, and sold himself to the devil. And Cardinal Benno, who flourished about the same time as Bishop Otho,

* Mr. Marsden's edition of Marco Polo, with his invaluable notes.

† Brown, *Fasciculus Rerum fugiendarum et expetendarum*, as cited by Harris, in *Philological Enquiries*.

says that the devil had assured the said Gerbert that he would never die until he had celebrated mass in Jerusalem, and that Gerbert, thinking only of the Holy City, went one morning and celebrated mass in a church at Rome named the church of Jerusalem, and died miserably as soon as he had done, and went straightways to the infernal regions and to the fiend who had juggled him.*

This will remind the reader of the Jerusalem Chamber in Henry IV.

King Henry. Doth any name particular belong
Unto the lodging where I first did swoon?

Warwick. 'Tis called Jerusalem, my noble lord.

King Henry. Laud be to heaven— even there my life
must end.

It hath been prophesied to me many years,
I should not die but in Jerusalem;
Which vainly I supposed the Holy Land.

Shakspeare found this prophecy in Holinshed's Chronicles, and used it with his exquisite art; Holinshed had found it in the monkish historians of an earlier age, and those monks had probably borrowed it from some of their predecessors. The Nile will be sooner traced to its real source than many of these tales to their origin.

Gerbert or Pope Silvester II. was elected in 999 to the pontifical chair, which he vacated by his death about five years after. He was a very voluminous writer, and had been an excellent teacher. Geometry and astronomy were his favorite pursuits. He wrote on the astrolabe and its uses, and there is or was extant a MS. of his on Sun-dials. He was one of the first Christians of

* BROWN, Fasciculus, as cited by Harris.

the dark ages that lighted the torch of science at the Eastern fire; but in those days men could hardly have dealings with Mohammedans or their writings without incurring the suspicion of dealing with the devil.

CHAPTER IV.

THE earliest of our travellers to the East are to be considered as pilgrims; although some of them, like King Alfred's bishop, united to their devotion an eagerness to acquire geographical information, and a desire to extend the commerce of their country. From the fourth century down to the end of the fifteenth there was perhaps no considerable interval in which the different nations of Europe did not send forth their pilgrims to the Holy Land. The numbers varied materially at different periods, but there seem always to have been some palmers going to and coming from Jerusalem. Many went through Italy, and thence by sea in the ships of the Amalfitans or Pisans or Genoese, who kept up a constant intercourse with Egypt and the coast of Syria from the beginning of the eighth to the end of the fourteenth century. Few of these wanderers have left any accounts of their distant journeys and perilous adventures. Our Saxon and Danish ancestors caught the prevailing taste or devotion, and pilgrimages from England appear to have been rather frequent even before the Norman Conquest.

In the time of King Canute the Dane, about the year 1020, there was living in the fens of Lincolnshire a monk who had gained distinction by visiting Jerusalem and returning thence. This was Andrew Leucander or Whiteman, as his name has been translated by Leland. He was of Saxon birth, and a monk of the great Benedictine monas-

tery of Ramsey. He is described as being devoted to the study of the sciences, and as the most diligent of students. His biblical studies inspired him with an unconquerable wish to visit Palestine. Some time after his return from his pilgrimage he became abbot of Ramsey, being the third lord abbot of that house.

The pilgrimage of King Canute to Rome is recorded in all our histories; but that great sovereign, though desirous of so doing, could not spare time to proceed to the East.

Sweno, one of the sons of Earl Godwin, having murdered one of his brothers, and committed many other heinous offences, made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in expiation of his crimes, and was killed by the Saracens. During the same long reign of Edward the Confessor, three Englishmen were sent by the king to Constantinople and Asia Minor. This is a truly monkish story, abounding in the superstitions of the times. It is first told by William of Malmesbury, who wrote his *Chronicles* during the reign of King Stephen, or about a century after the said journey.

Upon the holy festival of Easter, King Edward the Confessor, wearing his royal crown, sat at dinner in his palace of Westminster, surrounded by his bishops and nobles. He was very devout and ascetic; and while others feasted on delicate viands, he meditated on divine things; but while he was thus occupied he astonished all present by bursting into a sudden and excessive laughter. After dinner, when he retired to his bed-chamber to divest himself of his royal robes, three of his nobles, Earl Harold, who was afterwards king, and an abbot and a bishop, followed him, and asked the

reason of his rare mirth. "I saw," said the pious king, "things most wonderful to behold, and therefore did I not laugh without reason." They entreated him to explain; and after musing for a while he informed them that the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, who had been sleeping for two hundred years in a cavern in Mount Coelius, lying always on their right sides, had of a sudden turned themselves over on their left sides; that by heavenly grace he had seen them so turn themselves, and therefore could not but laugh. And as Harold and the abbot and bishop much marvelled at his words, the king explained to them the story of the Seven Sleepers, with the shape and proportion of their several bodies, which wonderful things no man had as yet committed to writing: nay, he spoke of the Ephesian sleepers as though he had always dwelt with them. The curious Ephesian legend which during the dark ages was spread over the greater part of the known world, among Saracens as well as among Christians, and which is still a common tradition as well among the Christian Greeks and Armenians as among the Turks of Asia Minor, appears to have originated among the very credulous people of Ephesus at a very early time. Saint Augustin, who wrote towards the end of the fourth century of the Christian era, says that some Ephesians, or people who came from Ephesus, and who had a deal of wit and merit, assured him that Saint John the Evangelist was not dead; that indeed the saint was buried at Ephesus, but that he lay in his grave only as a man sleeping in his bed. The unit was multiplied into seven, and St. John the Evangelist was dismissed the company; but still we believe

that this was the origin of the tale, which was afterwards subjected to many other changes. According to the early Eastern Christian writers cited by Gibbon, the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus had broken their slumber nearly six hundred years before Edward the Confessor's great dinner and strange vision at Westminster. The legend, as told by Gibbon, is this:—When the Emperor Decius persecuted the Christians, seven noble youths of Ephesus concealed themselves in a spacious cavern in the side of a mountain, where they were doomed to perish by the tyrant, who caused the mouth of the cave to be blocked up with a pile of huge stones. Instead of starving and dying, the youths fell into a deep slumber, and never woke until the end of one hundred and eighty-seven years, when the Christian Emperor Theodosius was reigning, and the Christian faith established in all parts of the empire. The Bishop of Ephesus, the clergy, the magistrates, the people, and the Emperor Theodosius himself, are said to have visited the cavern, and to have heard from the lips of the Seven Sleepers their own story almost as soon as they awoke. Before the end of the sixth century this legend was translated from the Syriac into the Latin language, by the care of Gregory of Tours. The names of the Seven Sleepers are honourably inscribed in the Roman, the Abyssinian, and the Russian calendars. But after their awaking in the time of Theodosius, the seven Ephesians were set to sleep again by various legend-writers. In the earlier part of the seventh century Mohammed, who might have learned the popular tale when he drove his camels to the fairs of Syria, introduced it as a divine revelation into the Koran. The Arabian

prophet of course modified it; he gave the Seven Sleepers a dog to watch them in their slumbers, he made the sun change its course twice every day to avoid shining into the cavern, and he made Allah himself preserve the bodies of the youths by turning them to the right and left; but the main type of the story is one and the same. "The story of the Seven Sleepers," adds Gibbon, "has been adopted and adorned, by the nations from Bengal to Africa, who profess the Mohammedan religion; and some vestiges of a similar tradition have been discovered in the remote extremities of Scandinavia." Like the voyage of Sindbad, the tale of the Hunchback, and others of those Arabian narratives, it is still commonly told by the professional itinerant story-tellers in Turkey.

But to return to our very monkish King Edward the Confessor, who saw the Seven Sleepers turn on their sides six hundred years after their grand réveillé, Earl Harold, upon hearing the particulars of his vision, got ready a knight, a clerk, and a monk, who were forthwith sent as ambassadors to *Maniches*, the reigning emperor at Constantinople, with letters and presents from King Edward. Malmesbury does not tell us how they travelled; but he assures us that the emperor received them with all honour and kindness, and after entertaining them hospitably at Constantinople, sent them on to Ephesus with letters to the Bishop, commanding him to admit the three Englishmen into the cavern to see the Seven Sleepers. And lo, it came to pass that the vision of King Edward was proved to be true by all the Ephesians, who declared that they knew from their forefathers that the said sleepers had always slept

on their right sides; but upon the entry of the Englishmen into the cave they were all found lying on their left sides. Nor was it long ere Ephesus was turned topsy-turvy by Tartars, Turks, and Saracens,—those enemies of the people of Christ, who among them destroyed many cities both in the greater and lesser Asia, and in Syria and Palestine, not sparing even the holy city of Jerusalem: and it was because these calamities were coming that the Seven Sleepers had turned themselves, and that the saintly Confessor had been treated with a miraculous vision of their turning. Such is the legend which the monk of Malmesbury relates, without seeming to entertain any doubts of its authenticity. Of the adventures of the three ambassadors on their long journey he makes no mention.

In the year 1058, or two years after the date assigned to the journey of the three ambassadors to Ephesus, Alured, bishop of Worcester, resigned his bishopric and set out for the Holy Land. He is said to have travelled through Germany, Hungary, and other countries, and to have reached Jerusalem.

The pilgrimage of Ingulphus, abbot of Crowland, as far as strict authenticity is concerned, must, we suppose, be given up, with the whole of the amusing chronicle in which they are contained. Sir Francis Palgrave has shown almost demonstratively that the Chronicle is little more than an historical novel, which was probably written as late as the thirteenth or even the fourteenth century by some monk of Peterborough, eager to exalt the reputation of his house.* It seems to us

* See Quarterly Review.

to embody the many traditions which were sure to float in a secluded monastic establishment like that of Crowland, descending from one generation of monks to another, and receiving ornament or amplification in their progress. There seems to be no rational doubt that there was a real living Ingulphus, of English birth, in the eleventh century, that he had visited the Holy Land, and that after his return he became abbot of Crowland. Possibly the Chronicle only slightly exaggerates his adventures as a traveller and pilgrim. The story is thus told. Being in Normandy, he heard a report that several archbishops of the empire, and some even of the secular princes, were resolving to go to the Holy Sepulchre for the salvation of their souls. He joined a company of some thirty Norman horsemen or more, and, travelling into Germany, he and they united themselves to the Archbishop of Mentz, who had assembled 7000 pilgrims, properly equipped for the journey. They all travelled together through many countries, arriving at last at Constantinople. There they saluted the Greek emperor Alexius, visited the grand church of Santa Sophia, and kissed many precious relics. Crossing the Bosphorus into Asia, they travelled through Lycia, where they fell among Saracens and thieves, who plundered them and treated them very cruelly. Losing many of their numbers, they continued their journey through Asia Minor and Syria, and finally reached Jerusalem, and there wept and prayed in the sepulchre of our Lord, and in all the places he had made holy by his presence during his stay upon earth. They would fain have gone forth into the country to wash themselves in the sacred river Jordan, and to

kiss the footsteps of the Redeemer; but the Arabian robbers, who were very numerous and ferocious, and who lurked in every part of the country, would not allow them to travel far from the city walls. In the spring of the year a fleet of ships from Genoa arrived at Joppa; and when the Christian merchants had disposed of their commodities on the coast, and had visited the holy places, Ingulphus and the rest of his great company of pilgrims that remained alive embarked with him, and they all set sail for Italy. After a rough and perilous voyage, the pilgrims reached the mouth of the Adriatic, and were landed at Brundisium. From that ancient seaport they travelled through Apulia and other provinces, now included in the kingdom of Naples, to the Eternal City. At Rome they visited the habitations of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and all the other places that were most revered. On quitting the spiritual capital of the Christian world the pilgrims separated, the Archbishop of Mentz and his reduced company taking the shortest road for Germany, and the others making direct for France. "Of thirty horsemen of us," says the Chronicle, "who went from Normandy fat and lusty, scarce twenty poor pilgrims returned, and all on foot, and reduced almost to skeletons." Whether these adventures be strictly true, as applied to Ingulphus, they were certainly such as befell many thousands of palmers before the first Crusade.

The regions of romance were thickly peopled by these returning pilgrims, and by the credulous Crusaders who followed in their footsteps; and the origin of perhaps half of the tales and fictions which were spread over the West may be traced to

the East and to these ages. The tales that were brought back about the distant parts of Asia which neither pilgrims nor Crusaders ever visited, were all exaggerated by Oriental imagination and hyperbole, and tintured with the glowing colours of the East. The still lamented Southey, whose mind teemed with these Eastern matters, speaks of "the Arabesque ornaments of an Arabian tale."* These Arabesque ornaments gradually mixed themselves in the pile of our Gothic literature. To the easy confiding faith of the Europeans of the middle ages, who took their accounts from Arabians and vivacious Greeks, Sindbad was a real navigator, and his adventures were held to be indubitably true, instead of being considered as truths Orientalized. Sober and discerning travellers like Rubruquis and Marco Polo were exceedingly rare; and even Marco Polo was obliged to depend upon hearsay accounts for his brief notices of regions which he could not visit himself.

The trading Italians, who went so frequently to the East, seem to have been entirely absorbed by their commerce and devotion. The chronicles and old histories of Pisa, Genoa, Venice, Florence, and other cities or states, make frequent mention of their voyages, but rarely if ever give any details respecting them. Now and then indeed the monkish writers applaud their ingenuity in importing from Egypt and Syria the bodies or relics of saints, the wood of the true cross, and the like. Thus the Venetian chroniclers tell at length "the pious fraud" by which in the eighth century possession was obtained of that pride and glory and protection

* Preface to *Thalaba*.

of their city, the body of Saint Mark the Evangelist. That body was reposing in a small chapel in the city of Alexandria, and the chapel was every day threatened with destruction by the conquering Caliph and his unbelieving Saracens. The priest who had charge of the chapel sold the body of the Saint to two Venetian merchants, in order that it might be transported to some safer and more honourable shrine. But the poor Christians of Alexandria did not like to lose the dead saint, and the Saracens, who abhorred such relics, would have seized and destroyed the body if they had detected the two Venetians in the act of carrying it off. It was a case full of difficulty. Even the poor Christians would have fought in the streets if any discovery had been made. And then the Mohanmedans kept a guard at the harbour to examine everything that was shipped. But the two Venetian traders, being ready-witted men, put the body of the saint in a great and deep basket, and covered it over, and filled the basket up to the brim with the flesh of hogs newly killed; and when the Infidels on guard saw that flesh, which is equally abhorred by Mohanmedans and Jews, they threw their noses up in the air in disgust, and bade the Venetians make haste to get on board with that abomination; and so that inestimable relic, which had made Venice what she was, was got safely into the ship; and the anchor was weighed and every sail immediately spread; and albeit the devil, out of spite to the saint and evangelist, raised some frightful tempests during the voyage, the two merchants brought the body to Venice, and thereby gained immortal glory.

With the exception of Carpini, and that greatest

of all the travellers of the middle ages, Marco Polo, the Italians had in these times no man that wrote his own account of his distant travels; or if they had any such, their manuscripts have escaped notice:

Our own early literature is not richer in this particular. For several ages all that we know of our early travellers is from the cursory notice of some monkish chronicler.

The expedition to the Holy Land of Duke Robert, son of William the Conqueror, not only drew to the East many English crusaders who were eager to gain glory under him, but it also attracted many of our countrymen to Palestine after Robert's return: and, thus early, English ships began to penetrate the Straits of Gibraltar and to ascend the Mediterranean sea to Candia, Cyprus, and the Syrian coast for the united purposes of trade, privateering, and devotion. These bold navigators are generally called pirates even by the Christian writers. Perhaps they were not always particular in observing whether the vessels they attacked at sea carried the Turkish crescent or the Christian cross at their mast-heads. It appears, however, that on sundry occasions these bold rovers rendered important services to the newly-established Christian kingdom of Jerusalem. In the third year of the reign of Henry I. of England and the second year of the reign of Baldwin, king of Jerusalem, the Saracens brought down a large army and besieged the crusaders in Joppa. King Baldwin was absent, being at a distant part of the coast, and unable to find the means of getting into the besieged city. The hearts of the Christians failed them because of this absence, and the Paynim

pursued their operations with wondrous vigour. If Joppa should fall, the new throne in Jerusalem would be in jeopardy. The king wrung his hands and looked across the blue sea in fruitless search of some friendly sail to waft him to Joppa. But at the critical moment a Buss, belonging to one Goderic, a pirate of the King of England, came to the coast, and Baldwin instantly embarked therein. Hoisting his banner on the top of a lance, and holding it up aloft in the beams of the sun, that the Christians might see it and be comforted, and that their besiegers might be abashed, King Baldwin in the English vessel, and with only a small company with him, dashed into the harbour of Joppa. The Saracens surrounded the Buss with twenty galleys and thirteen ships, but, favoured by wind and wave, the pirate broke through them all, and landed the Christian king safely in the beleaguered city. The Saracens, astonished and alarmed, raised the siege at midnight, and went and encamped on some hills more than a mile off. There they were soon attacked by King Baldwin, and the crusaders, aided by the English captain and his crew. The Paynim were thoroughly defeated, and such of them as were not slaughtered in the battle were driven away into Egypt. It is noted by the chronicler that in the course of this very year two hundred crowded ships from various parts of Christendom reached Joppa, and there landed their passengers and crews, that they might perform their devotions at Jerusalem. Conspicuous among these sea captains was an Englishman called Hardine, who was one of the leaders of a fleet or squadron. Five years after this, or in the year 1107, there is mention of the arrival at Joppa of another great

fleet of English, Danes, and Flemings.* It is not probable that any of these adventurers were qualified to describe the countries they saw; but mention is made of an enlightened traveller, who was animated not by traffic or plunder or superstition, but by a thirst for knowledge, to visit remote lands; and here, as in a few other cases, we may grieve that no account is left of the voyage and journey.

“Athelard [or Adelard], monk of the abbey of Bath, says an old writer, “was so diligent a searcher into the secrets and causes of natural things, that he deserved to be compared with the ancient philosophers. This man was young, yet being of a good wit, and desirous to increase and enrich the same with the best knowledge, and to prepare himself, as it were, for greater matters, left his country for a time, and travelled into foreign regions. He went through Egypt and Arabia, and found out many things, which he desired to know, to his own great contentment, and the profit of good letters generally; and so being satisfied, he returned again into his country.”†

This enlightened traveller, of whom nothing else is known except that he translated Euclid from Arabic into Latin, flourished about the year 1130; in the latter part of the reign of Henry I. Mention is also made of one Robert of Reading—apparently a monk of Reading Abbey—who travelled into Spain to acquire a knowledge of mathematics from the Moorish or Arab conquerors of that country. But although he lived among Moham-medans, it is not said that he crossed the Mediterranean. He wrote upon the positive sciences about A.D. 1143. Between this date and that of the great

* Hakluyt and the Chroniclers quoted by him.

† John Bale, or Balæus, Bishop of Ossory, in *Illustrium Majoris Britanniae Scriptorum, &c.*, as rendered by Hakluyt.

Crusade of Richard I., several Englishmen are mentioned by name as having travelled in the Holy Land, and in the countries adjacent. Among them we find William de Mandeville, Earl of Essex, who was at Jerusalem in the year 1177, and who died in the year 1190.

In 1191, when Richard I. landed at Acre, he had with him the flower of English chivalry, and many ladies and lettered priests, who brought back with them into Europe a fresh supply of romantic and marvellous tales about the East. Richard's companion and rival, Philip Augustus of France, was attended in the like manner; and both the French and English historians of this great Crusade are in a good many cases to be considered as travellers as well as chroniclers, for they accompanied their respective sovereigns to the Holy Land, and describe places they had seen with their own eyes. Jerusalem and the other cities of Palestine, Mount Carmel, Mount Sion, the river of Jordan, and the Dead Sea, come into these quaint pictures; but the adventures narrated are all of a warlike kind, and belong rather to the romance of the Crusades than to the romance of travel. By the means of these crusading chroniclers, however, some vague notions were disseminated about the unknown countries of Central Asia, and even about India, China, and Japan; and a desire was awakened in Europe to know more concerning those remote and mysterious regions. The information came to the Crusaders and their chroniclers through various channels, but always warmly coloured with Eastern exaggeration and hyperbole. Even at that time there was no lasting interruption to the trade carried on between Central Asia and Asia Minor

and Syria, by means of annual caravans, and with Ceylon, the Malabar coast, other portions of India, and even with a part of China, by means of Arab navigators and merchants. It was, as we have said, in the perilous adventures of some of these Arabian men of the seas, that the voyages of Sindbad the sailor had their origin. During their long truces with Saladin and other Mohammedan princes, the Crusaders often visited the shores of the Red Sea, and they had still more frequently the opportunity of communicating with the traders who annually drove their camels between Balk and Bokhara, and Antioch and Damascus. No doubt they often took in a literal sense what was said metaphorically; no doubt they were often deceived by their imperfect acquaintance with the languages of the country, or by the proverbial carelessness or infidelity of Eastern drogomans and interpreters; but still the passion for exaggeration, common to all the people of the East, would frequently give the narrations they heard a marvellous and fictitious cast. Upon some little experience of our own, we can assert that we never heard an Oriental give a sober, unadorned, accurate account of any object he had seen, or of any event he had witnessed. An enlightened modern traveller, who resided long in the East, says—

“ Asiatics certainly are not, and I believe the Greeks were not, in the habit of making use of that precision of description to which Europeans are accustomed, and on which they pride themselves. I was present when Meerza Mohammed Hossein, who had been for many years Vizier of Persia, returned to Scherauze from his pilgrimage to Mecca, and was introduced to Luft Ali Khan, the then Prince of Persia. The prince, amongst

other things, questioned the Meerza in respect to Bussora river. The Meerza replied in these words literally—God save your Majesty! What shall I tell you of Bussora river? It is like the sea! Hyperbolical as this was, a man would have been mad to doubt whether or not Meerza Hossein had actually seen the Bussora river.”*

* Sir Harford Jones, as quoted by Dean Vincent, Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients in the Indian Ocean.

CHAPTER V.

WHILE the Crusaders and the Mohammedans were desperately contending with one another for the possession of the city of Jerusalem, and of the rest of the ancient heritage of the children of Israel, a European Jew traversed nearly the whole of Asia, and is supposed to have reached the frontiers of China, being the first European traveller to get so far to the eastward by land. This was Benjamin of Tudela, a Rabbi, who was the son of Jonas of Tudela, a small town in the kingdom of Navarre. He is said to have travelled in the East during thirteen years, or from 1160 to 1173. According to his 'Itinerary,' he travelled by land to Marseilles, where he embarked for Genoa. From that maritime city he proceeded to Rome, and from Rome he went to Otranto near the entrance of the Adriatic sea. Embarking again at Otranto, he was conveyed to the coast of Greece; and travelling through Greece and Thrace he reached Constantinople. A good and apparently a correct description is given of that great capital as it existed under the cowardly and effeminate Greek emperors. The Rabbi laments the hard usage to which the Jews are subjected by the Greeks, who appear to have treated the proscribed people in precisely the same manner in which the Jews have since been treated there by the Turks. No Jew, he says, is permitted to ride on horseback, except only Solomon the Egyptian, who is physician to

the emperor; the Jews are all much hated by the Greeks, who insult and beat them in the streets; but they are worst used by the Greek leather-dressers, or tanners, who pour out the filthy water in which they have dressed their skins, in the streets before their doors. Yet he adds, that among the Jews there are some very rich men, who are good and merciful men, observing the commandments of Moses, and patiently enduring the miseries of the captivity. Quitting Constantinople, Benjamin travelled to Tyre and Jerusalem, and thence to Damascus, Balbec, and Tadmor, or Palmyra. After this he stayed for a season at Bagdad. He next proceeded to Bassora on the Tigris, and from that city he travelled through Persia, finding, according to the published account of his travels, great multitudes of Jews settled in nearly every city. He again embarked—apparently in the Persian gulf—and found his way to some part of India. It is impossible to trace his course by the names he gives to the different places he visited. He lived a considerable time among the Parsees, or fire-worshippers on the Coromandel coast, of whose customs the ‘Itinerary’ gives a tolerably faithful account. His progress would naturally be facilitated by the friendship of the Jewish communities, who had already been established for some centuries, as well in China as in India. It was probably neither more nor less easy for this learned Rabbi to reach Hindustan, than it had been to King Alfred’s good bishop, or to other Christians, to perform the same voyage. Having seen a good deal of India, the Rabbi resolved to visit the Celestial empire. As he approached China he was told to his amazement that in the regions beyond that

empire the sea was often frozen, and that when mariners were so surprised they could not get out of the ice, and were miserably starved to death. On his return from the East he came to the Red Sea, and saw part of Abyssinia and nearly the whole of Egypt. He correctly describes the Nilometer, or the pillar on an island of the Nile, for measuring the annual rise of the waters, even as Herodotus had described it from personal observation sixteen hundred years before his time. He dwells with delight on the magnificence of the city of Alexandria, but grieves that the Christians have infested the coasts of Egypt with their ships of war, and have taken the two great neighbouring islands of Candia and Cyprus. He says he found that Egypt enjoyed an extensive trade, and that the port of Alexandria was swarming with ships from every part of Christendom, and especially from Valentia, Tuscany, Lombardy, Apulia, Sicily, and the city of Amalfi. But he adds that other vessels came from the most northern parts of Europe, as from Russia, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, England, and Normandy. Hither, he says, are brought the richest merchandizes of the Indies, and all sorts of perfumes and spices, which are purchased by the Christian merchants, and by them conveyed into Europe. Leaving Egypt, Benjamin, like a devout Jew, made a pilgrimage to Mount Sinai. Thence he returned to Damietta, where he took ship for Sicily. From Messina he travelled to Palermo. Crossing over to Italy, he again visited Rome, and sojourned for a time at Lucca. Afterwards he crossed the Alps by the great passes of the Tyrol, and spent a considerable time in various parts of Germany. Wherever he went, if there were any

Jewish settlers in the country, he seems to have depended upon their hospitality for his support, just as the monkish missionaries depended upon the hospitality of the Christians that were scattered over the East. In very many places he boasts of the numbers, the wealth, and the generosity of the Jews. The learned Rabbi does not often relate his merely personal adventures. His best story in this way, is, that on one long journey in the remote East he and his fellow travellers were so hungry that they ate up all the beasts of burden they had hired to carry their baggage.

It is not, however, to be supposed that the travels of this Spanish Jew of the twelfth century are without their marvels and prodigies. Though the Rabbi does not say much about his own adventures, he says, or is made to have said, a great deal about the adventures of other men. He tells a long story about one David, a Jew, who could make himself invisible, and cross a broad river on a handkerchief without wetting his feet. This David, the disciple of Jacob the chief of the Levites at Bagdad, was very learned in the law of Moses, in tongues, and in books, and in all doctrine, even in the language of the Ishmaelites, and in the books of the Magi; and he took it into his head to gather together the Jews who dwelt in the mountains of one of the provinces of Persia, to make war against the King of Persia, and then to go to Jerusalem and win it by assault. He persuaded many of the Israelites that he was the Messiah whose coming they expected. These credulous Jews broke out into insurrection. The king of Persia sent for David, who went to him without fear, and in his presence declared he was by law and prophecy the king of

the Jews. He was forthwith seized and thrown into a strong prison in the city of Dabrestan, on the great river Gozan. Some time after this his Persian majesty held a great council to consult how an end might be put to the insurrection of the Jews. While the members of this solemn divan were debating, David glided into the hall, being visible to the king but invisible to all the rest of the company. "Who hath delivered thee from prison and brought thee hither?" said the astonished and angry king. "Mine own wisdom; and I fear not thee, oh king, nor any of thy servants," replied the visible and invisible Jew. Then the dread majesty of Persia commanded his servants to seize him; but the servants made answer and said, that albeit the voice of David the Jew had been heard by all of them, they could not see the man. And thereupon David cried out with a loud voice, "Lo! I go my way!" and he walked out, and the king of Persia followed him, and all his servants followed the king; but still they saw no one. Coming to the bank of the broad and deep river, David spread his handkerchief on the waters, and he passed over dry, and then was he seen of all who were present; and they endeavoured to pursue him in boats, but it was all in vain; and so every one marvelled, and said that no enchanter could be compared to this man David the Israelite. Eventually David, like so many other Jews who in the course of the middle ages assumed the same character, and tried the same daring experiment, was abandoned by his followers and put to a cruel death. The foundation of the story of his magical performances is probably to be traced to some ingenious or daring escape which the impostor had really effected. It is; how-

ever, to be noticed that the walking upon water is a very ancient story in the East, and that some allusion to it occurs in many of the old travellers besides Benjamin of Tudela. Marco Polo, as we shall see presently, has his water-walkers. Moreover, it appears that some Orientals have a dexterous trick or sleight capable of deluding even an acute observer, and confounding his notions of specific gravity. We have before us a curious and hitherto unpublished letter of Warren Hastings, the illustrious Governor-General of India, who had been diligently perusing Mr. Marsden's valuable edition of the Venetian traveller.

"I am pleased," says Hastings to his correspondent, "that you were pleased with my commentary on a passage in Marco Polo. I have since met with another similar accordance, in the same book, with a fact of which I was an eye-witness, and which, I have no doubt, that the fastidious readers of those days passed to the account of the many incredibles which were laid to his charge. It was the traveller's assertion of his having seen a man walk—not swim, nor what is popularly called treading water, but literally—*walk* at more than the height of his waist above the bottom of a river. My own evidence of a similar feat occurred when I was at Lucnow, in the month of May, 1784, much about the time that you joined me there. One morning I went to visit the Prince Jehander Shah, whose quarters then occupied a terraced house close adjoining to the bank of the river. I had scarce made my obeisance when the prince said, 'I have a very extraordinary man in my service, who possesses the art of walking beyond his depth in the water. You shall see him if he is here.' Advancing then to the brink of the terrace, and calling to the people below, he asked if such a one, mentioning his name, was there. The man instantly made his appearance, being just then occupied in cooking his dinner,

with no other garment but his loonghee. The prince commanded him to let me see him walk in the water. The man, without other bidding or preparation, advanced, passed leisurely into the channel of the river, where his movements at this time, after a lapse of thirty-six years, still retain the indistinct but certain traces on my remembrance of his having walked, and moved about in the surrounding stream, with a buoyancy apparently independent of the physical effects of gravitation. I do not recollect whether any one accompanied me in this visit: if there did, Jonathan Scott is most likely to have been the person, and I should be much inclined to put his memory to this test, if it did not require the prior knowledge of his direction, a knowledge of no difficult attainment, except by one to whom everything presents a difficulty.”*

Benjamin of Tudela, as a Jewish Rabbi, seems to have devoted most of his attention to the far-scattered fragments of the Jewish nation. In many places this attention is exclusive of all other considerations. Places are mentioned in the ‘Itinerary’ merely because some Jews dwelt in them, and very often nothing more is said about them than that they contained a synagogue and so many families of Israelites. The numbers must very frequently be grossly exaggerated. The object of the book indeed appears to be to do honour to the Jewish people and to exaggerate their importance; as in the books of the monkish travellers there is a constant effort, if not to exaggerate the number of the Oriental Christians, to raise that of the European missionaries. And as the monks relate the

* This letter has an additional interest in its being one of the very last that Warren Hastings wrote. It is dated Daylesford House, the 9th of June, 1818; and on the 22nd of August of that year this truly great man died, aged eighty-six.

miracles said to have been performed by the saintly missionaries, so does our Rabbi deal largely in marvels and prodigies performed by the teachers and doctors of his faith. But it is to be suspected in both cases that much of this exaggeration and many of these prodigies have been gradually introduced by various copyists, each adding something to the manuscript upon which he worked. Until the invention of printing there was no permanent security against such interpolations. The original manuscript of a work (where any existed) could be known only to a limited number of persons, and could very rarely be compared with the written copies of it. Even when there was no intention of altering and interpolating, many errors would creep in as written copies were multiplied, and not from the original, but from copies, or copies of copies. The art of printing has not only diffused knowledge, but has also preserved it from error and falsification. When a thousand or ten thousand copies of a book began to be printed and distributed through the world, it was no longer easy to falsify or alter the contents, for the second edition could be compared with the first. We believe that if we had possessed this inestimable art at an earlier period, our old chroniclers and historians, as well as our old travellers, would often tell a very different story from that which is now told under their names.

Benjamin of Tudela's 'Itinerary' is said to have been first printed by the Jews at Constantinople in the year 1543, or nearly four centuries after the time in which he travelled. It was translated from the Hebrew into Latin, and printed at Antwerp in 1575. Since then there have been various

translations and commented editions of the work in France, Germany, and England, and the Rabbi invariably finds a place in every collection of travels which at all pretends to completeness. The 'Itinerary' was little likely to be known to Carpini, Rubruquis, Marco Polo, or any of the European Christian travellers in the East during the Middle Ages. These men would scarcely have deigned to peruse the work of a Jewish Rabbi, even if they could have read Hebrew; the Jews were at once exclusive and excluded, and manuscripts even in the Roman character and in Latin were excessively dear. Yet, as we have noticed with regard to the Mohammedan travellers of the ninth century, the accounts of these Christian travellers frequently go to confirm those given by Benjamin of Tudela.

As a very learned man, the Rabbi was probably able to read the marvellous romance which Philostratus called the life of Apollonius of Tyana; and even if he could not read that Greek he might pick up some of the wild tales from oral tradition, or his various editors may have embellished his narrative with these floating, long-lived fables. A few of Benjamin's stories have certainly a close affinity with those told of Apollonius.

"Yet Benjamin the Jew," says Renaudot, "is not so contemptible as some savans have made him. He has many curious and veritable things, not understood by those who undertook to translate him, as Arias Montanus, and after him Constantine l'Empereur. They worked upon the copy made at Constantinople, which was very faulty, and not very clean or clear. Arias Montanus committed enormous mistakes."

CHAPTER VI.

THE irruption of the Tartars into the West led directly to an extension of European travel in the East. While the Crusaders were contending with the Saracens for Palestine and the narrow regions adjoining it, the nomadic races and nations, conveniently but incorrectly designated by the general name of Tartars, being united under the rule of Zinghis or Genghis Khan, overran and subdued countries of incalculable extent. From the frontiers of China to the banks of the river Volga the great khan was lord and master. He afterwards conquered the five northern provinces or kingdoms of China, the whole of Transoxiana and Khorassan, and the greater part of Persia. The mighty shepherd warrior died in the year 1287, between the fifth and sixth grand Crusade. Four of his sons divided his empire among them, and steadily prosecuted his projects for extending it. By general consent a paramount authority was vested in Octai, the Khan of Khans. In the course of sixty years, and under the four successors of Zinghis, these Tartars, or Mongols, completed the conquest of China; reduced Corea, Cochin China, Pegu, Bengal, Thibet, and other countries in the East, and threw forward their advanced posts far into the West. Having secured the whole of Persia, except some of the mountainous districts, they drove their flocks and carried their arms into Armenia and Anatolia and Syria, driving the dispossessed

Turks upon the Christians in Palestine. In another direction, after reducing Georgia and Circassia, they advanced from the shores of the Black Sea, and traversing the breadth of Europe, penetrated to Livonia and the shores of the Baltic. Moscow and Kiow were burned to the ground, and the Muscovites were made tributaries to the great khan; Poland was devastated, and Cracow and other principal cities were given to the flames; the Polish palatines, the Duke of Silesia, the grand master of the Teutonic knights, and many other princes and chiefs of name, were defeated at Lignitz, and the whole of Christendom was thrown into consternation. Wherever the Mongols penetrated the country was laid bare. Whatever did not serve as food for themselves or for their multitudinous droves of cattle and their horses, or whatsoever could not be carried off, they destroyed. A recent French traveller and geographer has said, "The only traces, the only monuments of their passage are ruins, or pyramids of human skulls, resembling those of a more recent date which I have myself seen in the plains of Nissa in Servia, and from thence as far as the gates of Tauris."* These devastating hordes were commanded by the great Baatu, son of Tuli, and grandson of Zinghis Khan. They were estimated at half a million of people. Turning aside, they poured into Hungary, and reduced the whole of that country to the north of the Danube. In the winter they crossed the Danube on the ice, and advanced to Gran, then the capital of Hungary and a place of great strength, though not strong enough to resist their numbers

* M. Jaubert, in *Nouveau Journal Asiatique*, Paris, 1833, vol. xii. Dissertation on the ancient Course of the Oxus.

and their headlong rage. The Hungarians were slaughtered, men, women, and children promiscuously; of all the cities and fortresses only three were left standing; and the king of this desolated land fled far away to the Adriatic Sea, there to seek a refuge in some island inaccessible to the shepherd-warriors. A Russian or Muscovite fugitive carried the alarm into Sweden, whence it spread into other countries beyond the Baltic.

"In the year 1238," says Gibbon, "the inhabitants of Gothia (Sweden) and Frise were prevented, by their fear of the Tartars, from sending, as usual, their ships to the herring-fishery, on the coast of England; and as there was no exportation, forty or fifty of these fish were sold for a shilling.* It is whimsical enough that the orders of a Mogul Khan, who reigned on the borders of China, should have lowered the price of herrings in the English market."

At Neustadt, in Austria, the ill-equipped invaders were brought to a stand by fifty brave knights and a few cross-bowmen who undertook to defend the town; and at the approach of a great German army, led on by the Emperor Frederic II., they raised that siege, and began to retreat through Servia, Bothnia, and Bulgaria, which countries they laid waste on their march. From the left bank of the Danube they slowly retired to the Volga, where the great Baatu had a city and a palace. Fearing that they might again invade the West, the pope resolved to send an embassy to

* The original authority for this statement is the chronicle of Matthew Paris. We apprehend that there must be some mistake in the figures, for as has been observed by Mr. Kerr (General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels, Edinburgh, 1824), forty or fifty herrings for a shilling, at that time, would not have been very cheap, but very dear.

them. This was a mission that none coveted, for it was believed to be full of danger. The most fearful stories had been spread of the ferocity and even cannibalism of these pagans ; and no Christian lord or knight could relish the chance of being eaten like Tartar horse-beef. But the mendicant friars, whose orders had been quite recently formed, were animated by an heroic zeal and a contempt of personal danger and privations, and it was among these cloister monks that the ambassadors to Baatu were to be sought. Pope Innocent IV. and his cardinals selected six monks, two from the Franciscan order, and four from the Dominican order. *Johannes de Plano Carpiui*, as his name is Latinized, appears to have been the first chosen on account of his abilities and courage ; and his companion, a monk of his own severe order, was one *Benedict*, a Polander, whose knowledge of some of the north-eastern countries of Europe must have been very useful on the journey. These two friars were instructed to take their route through Bohemia, Poland, and Russia, and then by the north of the Caspian Sea. The other four friars, *Asceline* and *Alexander*, *Albert* and *Simon de St. Quintin*, were ordered to proceed through Syria, Persia, and Khorassan, by the south of the Caspian Sea. Of the journey of the latter we have no satisfactory account ; and it is only *Carpini* who is entitled to figure in the list of old travellers. Of this remarkable monk of the thirteenth century so little is recorded that we can discover neither the time nor the place of his birth. Indeed, nothing seems to be known of him with any accuracy except through his own account of his mission ; and it is rather more than probable that the whole of

this account, as we now possess it, was not written or dictated by himself. We conjecture that he was born at a village in the neighbourhood of Monte Gargano, in the province of Capitanata, in the kingdom of Naples (Piano di Carpino), about A.D. 1210, and that he entered the order of St. Francis at a very early period of his own life, and only a short time after the formation of that order. He would thus be in his thirty-sixth or thirty-seventh year in 1246, when he started on his perilous expedition in company with the Polish friar. In the introductory epistle to his travels he says,—

“To all the faithful to whom this writing may come, I friar John de Plano Carpini, of the Order of Minors, legate and messenger from the apostolic see to the Tartars and other nations of the East, wish the grace of God in this life, and glory in the next, and perpetual triumph over all the enemies of the Lord. Having learned the will of our Lord the Pope, and the venerable Cardinals, and having received the commands of the Holy see, we determined to go in the first place to the Tartars; because we dreaded that the most terrible and nearest danger to the church of God arose from them. And albeit, we personally dreaded from these Tartars that we might be slain or reduced to perpetual slavery, or should suffer hunger and thirst, the extremes of heat and cold, reproach, and excessive fatigue beyond our strength, all of which, except death and captivity, we have verily endured, even beyond our first fears, yet did we not spare ourselves, so that we might obey the will of God, according to the orders of our Lord the Pope, or so that we might be useful in anything to the Christians, or at least, that the will and intention of those Pagan people might be assuredly known and made manifest to Christendom, lest suddenly invading us, they might find us unprepared, and so make an in-

credible slaughter of the Christian people. Hence, what we now write is for your advantage, that you may be on your guard, and more secure; it being what we saw with our own eyes, while we sojourned with and among those Pagans, during more than a year and four months, or which we have learned from Christian captives residing among them, and whom we believe to be worthy of credit. We were likewise enjoined by the supreme Pontiff to examine and inquire into everything very diligently; all of which both myself and friar Benedict of the same order, my companion in affliction and interpreter, have carefully performed."

The stories that were current throughout Western Europe at the time they were first appointed to their mission were enough to deter the boldest hearts. The want of accurate information was supplied by the fertile and exaggerating fancy of fear and superstition. The Tartars were represented as invincible in war and insensible to any emotions of humanity. A letter had been recently circulated, written by one Yvo of Narbonne to the Archbishop of Bordeaux, containing the confession of an Englishman touching the barbarous demeanour of these Tartars. The Englishman, according to his confession, or according to this letter, had been perpetually banished out of the realm of England for certain notorious crimes, and had betaken himself to the Holy Land. Not long after his banishment, being at Acon or Acre, and thirty years old, he lost all his money at dice. Then, having nothing but a shirt of sackcloth, a pair of shoes, and a hair cap, and being shaven like a fool, he set out on his travels through Syria and Asia Minor, and, to prosper the better, he feigned idiocy and dumbness, for idiots have been at all times objects of superstitious reverence with the

Turks ; and the pretence of being dumb aided in concealing the facts that he could not speak the language of the country, and that he was a Ghiaour or Christian. After long wandering, he fell among the Mongol Tartars, learned their language, and went with them when they commenced their march upon Europe. The horde which he followed was defeated and driven back by a mighty army collected by the Duke of Austria, the Duke of Bohemia, the Patriarch of Aquileia, and others, including the Prince of Dalmatia, who took eight prisoners, and among them this strange Englishman. The letter of Yvo of Narbonne describes our vagrant countryman as being "somewhat learned," and as having been employed as interpreter and ambassador by the Tartars in their communications with the Christian Princes. The account the fellow gave to his captors, though flimsy and very short, was full of horror. The fiction of cannibalism was strongly affirmed : the Tartars were said to eat the prisoners they took in their wars and invasions, and to have a particular relish for the flesh of young virgins, although they generally ate the old women first.* No portion of the horrible story was doubted when the devoted Italian friar and his comrade the Polander began their journey. In Bohemia, in Poland, in Russia, and wherever the widely spread Slavonian language was spoken, Friar Benedict the Pole served the Italian as interpreter. The two monks ran great danger of being murdered by the people of Lithuania, who appear to have been at this time many degrees more barbarous than the Mongols. In Russia they

* Hakluyt, Navigations and Discoveries.

were upon the whole hospitably and kindly entertained. As the Russians adhered to the Greek or Eastern Church, Carpini, in a public meeting, exhorted the grand duke and his bishops to abandon their heresy, and boldly read to them the letters of Pope Innocent, wherein they were admonished to return into the unity of the Roman Catholic Church. Although our Franciscan effected no conversion, he raised no animosity by this boldness. He received many presents, together with much good advice as to the best means of dealing with the Tartars. He and his companion Benedict were sent forward at the duke's expense to Kiow, then the chief city of Russia, which had risen from its ruins, and which was not very far from the uncertain, moveable frontier of the Mongols. At Kiow they hired an interpreter, but they afterwards found reason to lament that this man was unequal to the duties he had undertaken to perform. As frequently happened with the drogomans of the monkish missionaries, this man of Kiow appears to have had no taste for sermons or for religious controversies. Besides an interpreter, they procured fresh horses from the men of Kiow.

“They told us that if we carried those horses which we then had unto the Tartars, great store of snow lying upon the ground, they would all die, because they knew not how to dig up the grass under the snow, as the Tartarian horses do, neither could there be aught found for them to eat, the Tartars having neither hay nor straw, nor any other fodder. We determined therefore to leave them behind at Kiow, with two servants appointed to keep them. And we were constrained to bestow gifts upon the Millenary, that we might obtain his favour to allow us post-horses and a guide.”

With hardy, shaggy little horses, of the breed which has since been made famous under the name of "Cossack horses," they resumed their journey. They had to traverse the boundless plain of Southern Russia (then called Comania), which is watered by the great rivers Dnieper, Don, Volga, and Yaik or Ural. On the first Saturday after Ash Wednesday, near upon sunset, as the monks were taking up their quarters for the night, a number of armed Tartars came suddenly upon them, in a threatening manner, demanding who they were. They replied that they were messengers from the Pope; and the Tartars rode away and left them so soon as they had received some of the friar's victuals. The next morning, as he was proceeding on his journey, Carpini was met by a great Tartar chief, who demanded to know the purport of his coming. The monk answered that he was going from the father and lord of the Christians to the emperor and princes of the Tartars to desire peace and friendship, and to admonish them to embrace the true faith, without which they could not be saved: that the pope was astonished at their monstrous slaughter of mankind, more especially of the Hungarians, Muscovites, and Polanders, who had neither injured nor attempted to injure the Tartars, and that as God was sore offended by such proceedings, the pope admonished them to refrain in future, and to repent of what they had already done. The chief procured them horses and a guide, and sent them forward to the next station. Intolerance and bigotry were not among the Tartar vices. The Mongols at this time occupied all the country between China, Siberia, and the Caspian Sea, the van of their nomadic army being on

the river Dnieper, and its rear under the great wall of China. The subordinate khans passed the two monks onward from post to post until they came to the head-quarters of the great Baatu. These posts were far apart, and the intervening tracts of country were sufficiently dismal. The old inhabitants had been nearly exterminated by the Tartars, and little was to be seen except pyramids of human skulls, and skulls and bones strewed on the ground. Some of these bones merely marked the places where the wandering tribes had been encamped for a time, and had killed their horses for food; but other bones denoted the slaughter of men, women, and children. The country where Baatu had his camp (called by the travellers a part of Comania), was far beyond the Caspian Sea. But their toils were not yet over. Baatu ordered them to proceed to the court of his sovereign the khan of khans, Emperor of China, and lord of all mankind. They then entered a country called by them "the country of the pagan Naymani," where they journeyed for many days, till they came to the proper lands of the Mongols. Through this latter country they travelled for about three weeks, continually riding on horseback and at a rapid pace.

"In the whole of this journey," says the narrative of the monks, "we used extraordinary exertion, as our Tartar guides were commanded to take us on with all possible expedition; on which account we always travelled from early morning till night, without stopping to take food; and we often came to our quarters so late as not to get any food that night, but were forced to eat in the morning what we ought to have had for supper. We changed horses frequently every day, and travelled constantly as hard as the horses could go."

It is not easy to name the places or even to trace the route which they followed ; but they appear to have passed by the head of the Baikal lake, and to have traversed great part of the country vaguely denominated Chinese Tartary, going in the direction of the Great Wall of China. In all these vast regions, thinly occupied by the Mongols and their flocks and herds, there was not one fixed town, there was scarcely a house ; for the people of all degrees, not excepting the khans and the emperor himself, lived in tents, and moved from place to place as pasturage or war or other business required. They describe one immense tent which was so vast that they thought it might have contained two thousand persons. This tent was surrounded by an enclosure of planks painted with various figures and symbols. It belonged to the grand khan's mother, a lady of great wisdom and influence, who was considered by the Tartars as having secured the throne of the universe for her son. The monk adds that the tent was formed of the finest white cloth, and that it had two gates or entrances, one of which stood continually open, and without any guard, yet no man or woman dared to enter therein. The second gate was the gate of audience, but admission could only be obtained by the express order of the khan. These monks make no mention of the curious car-houses of which Rubruquis gives a particular account. Wherever the great chiefs were, the assemblage of tents and the camp had a name, which the monks set down, like the name of a town or city ; but in all probability, within a short time after their passage, these tents were all struck and removed to a distant quarter, and the populous spot was left a

solitude in the vast surrounding wilderness. As they make no mention of travelling on camels, or of their entering upon that desert, they must have found the emperor or great khan somewhere to the north of the great sandy desert which spreads itself between the Great Wall and Tartary. Here they do not attempt to name the place, merely calling it the Court of the Emperor. This great potentate, whom they name Kujak or Cuine Khan, had many spacious tents and an enormous attendance, composed of people of many nations. The court was surrounded by countless flocks and herds. It was on the feast of St. Mary Magdalen, or the 22nd of July, that the monks arrived at this court. The emperor ordered them to be provided with a tent and all necessary expenses, after the Tartar custom, and his people treated them with more attention and respect than they had hitherto met with. All the Tartar khans were assembled in the neighbourhood, with their followers, and they were amusing themselves by riding about the hills and valleys. Some of them no doubt were hawking, as that sport is much followed in that part of Asia. Carpini says that he and his companion did not drink cosmos, or the milk of mares fermented, but that the Tartars made them drink so much of another liquor that they were seriously incommoded thereby. Princes and great lords from China and Cochlin China, a duke from Russia, two sons of the King of Georgia, an envoy of the Caliph of Bagdad, and more than ten other Mohammedan envoys, were waiting submissively upon the Mongol conqueror. The monks were informed that there were above four thousand envoys present, some from those countries which paid tribute, some from other sul-

tans and dukes who came to offer their submission, some who had been summoned by the emperor, and some from the various governors of countries and places under his authority. The eyes of Carpini and his poor companions were dazzled by the display made by these Oriental diplomatists. They were mounted on high-bred horses splendidly caparisoned, having trappings of pure gold. Each day they came forth in a different dress; now in white, now in scarlet, now in blue, and lastly in very rich Baldakin* robes, the finest in all the world. On the great day of audience all these envoys were placed on the outside of the wooden wall of the great tent occupied by the emperor, and were abundantly supplied with meat and drink. None were allowed to approach the khan of khans without performing the kotoo, that is, without making nine prostrations and knocking their foreheads nine times against the ground. The emperor, in fact, was worshipped like a divinity. Under these circumstances, letters scarcely intelligible and an admonitory message from the pope delivered by two bare-legged friars, were not likely to make much impression upon the great and inflated shepherd warrior. While the friars stayed about the gilded tent a warlike ceremony was performed.

* These robes were probably manufactured in India or in China, and introduced into the more western parts of the world by caravan travelling through the city of Bagdad. In very old, as well as in modern Italian, the term *Baldachino* signifies the splendid silk canopy or umbrella which is carried, in procession, over the host or other sacred objects. The dictionary Della Crusca gives as a Latin equivalent *pannus sericus Babylonicus*, but both Ancient Babylon and the more modern Bagdad imported their silk stuffs from the countries lying beyond the Indian Ocean.

They thought the ceremony signified a defiance against the Church of Rome, the Roman empire, and all the Christian kingdoms and nations of the West; and they were otherwise informed that it was the intention of these Mongols to subdue all the kingdoms of the earth, as Zinghis Khan had commanded them to do.

“Of all the nations under Heaven,” says the narrative, “it is only the Christians that they have some fear of; and, on this account, they are now preparing to make war on us. In all his letters their emperor styles himself the power of God and the emperor of mankind; and the seal of the present emperor is inscribed **GOD IN HEAVEN AND CUINE KHAN ON EARTH, THE POWER OF GOD, THE SEAL OF THE EMPEROR OF ALL MEN.**”

The lord of the world, however, admitted the monks to an audience, received from them the letter of the pope, and gave them in return letters for his holiness written in the Mongol language, and also in Arabic. Pope Innocent's letter, the substance of which has been already given, was very free in its style and language. It began thus:—

“Since not only men, but also irrational animals, and even the mechanical mundane elements, are united by some kind of alliance, after the example of superior spirits, whose hosts the Author of the universe has established in a perpetual and peaceful order, we are compelled to wonder, not without reason, how you, as we have been told, having entered many lands of Christians and others, have visited them with horrible desolation, and still, with lasting fury, not ceasing to extend further your destroying hands, outraging every natural tie, and sparing neither sex nor age, direct indifferently against all mankind the fury of the sword.” The Holy Scriptures were upheld as the best corrective of his fury and atrocity, and the King of the Tartars was admonished

that although the Omnipotent God sometimes spares the proud man, he is sure to smite him with his vengeance if he do not repent and humble himself. The letter ended with these few words about the ambassadors the pope had selected :—"We have chosen to send unto you these poor friars, on account of their exemplary conduct and knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, and because they will be more useful to you from their imitating the humility of our Saviour ; and if we had thought they would be more grateful and useful to you, we would have sent you prelates or other powerful men." It was bold in the monks to present such a letter.*

But the hospitality with which they had been at first welcomed soon ceased. This apparently arose from their having gone thither so empty-handed. The other envoys at the golden tent presented infinite quantities of rich gifts of all kinds, as costly skins and furs, purple robes, silken girdles wrought with gold, splendid umbrellas covered with gems, camels, horses, and mules richly caparisoned ; but when the Franciscan friars were asked what gifts they had to offer, they were compelled to say that they had none. They complained that during their stay at court they were in such extreme distress for victuals and drink that they could hardly keep themselves alive.

"But God," says the narrative, "sent to our aid a Russian goldsmith, who was considerably favoured by the emperor, and who procured us some food. This good man did also show us the emperor's throne and seal, which he had been employed to make."

* The whole of this letter has been extracted by M. d'Avezac from the *Annals of the Minorite order*, and published by him in the *Recueil de Voyages, &c.*—a very valuable work conducted by the Paris Geographical Society.

At last, on the feast of St. Brice (the 13th of November, 1247), they received permission to depart from this inhospitable court. They returned by the same route by which they had gone, travelling the whole winter through the desert, and often sleeping at night on the snow.

“ Then taking our journey to return, we travelled all winter long, lying in the deserts oftentimes upon the snow, except that with our feet we made a piece of ground bare to lie upon. For there were no trees, but the plain champaign field. And oftentimes in the morning we found ourselves all covered with snow driven over us by the wind.”

The emperor's mother had given each of them a warm cloak made of fox-skins, but their roguish Tartar guides cut away and stole half of the skins of which the cloaks were made. They again visited the court of the great Baatu, and the encampment of another Tartar Khan still nearer to Russia, where they were asked again for presents. Many broad rivers they had to pass upon the ice ; but like the rest of these early monkish missionaries, they say exceedingly little about their personal dangers and sufferings, hereby contrasting advantageously with many, or perhaps most, modern travellers. The monks were upheld by a higher and nobler spirit than that of a mere love of distinction : they set down their privations and sufferings to the duty they owed to their order. They carried as much heroism under the cowl as ever was carried under the steel casque. On the 9th of June, 1248, they reached Kiow, where their Russian friends joyfully received them and welcomed them as men returned from death to life. In all they had passed sixteen months entirely

among the Mongols, and the people that had been conquered by them. Pope Innocent had enjoined them to be diligent and accurate in their observations, and faithful in reporting what they saw and heard of these strange people who had made all Europe tremble. The friars certainly acted up to these instructions, and, allowance being made for the state of geography and other sciences, and for the condition and superstitions of the time, the account which Carpini or his friends gave to the world was an admirable little book of travels, more accurate and sober than anything which had preceded it in the same line, either in modern Europe or among the Greeks and Romans. The spirit of exaggeration is scarcely visible in it, and its general accuracy has been confirmed by honest John Bell of Antermoney, who travelled to China with an embassy from Peter the Great, and by other and later travellers through the wide regions which intervene between European Russia and the celestial empire. Carpini was the first to uproot a set of monstrous fables, and to give a true and striking picture of the peculiar civilization of the Tartars. But, at the same time, he revealed their prodigious number, warlike strength, and close political union, and warned the disunited and distracted kingdoms of Christendom that if these hordes moved westward they would be found irresistible, unless a league of Christian princes were previously formed for the single purpose of opposing them. The section or chapter entitled "How the Tartars are to be resisted," abounds with good sense. Many of his descriptions are admirable for their brevity, point, and accuracy. In these particulars the friar may even stand a comparison

with Marco Polo. His naïveté only gives an antique grace.

“The Mongols or Tartars,” he says, “are in outward shape unlike our people. For they are broader between the eyes and in the balls of their cheeks, than men of other nations be. They have flat and small noses, small eyes, eyelids standing straight upright; and they are always shaven on the crowns like priests. . . . They are very rich in cattle, as in camels, oxen, sheep, and goats, and I think they have more horses and mares than all the world beside. Their emperor, dukes, and other of their nobles do abound with silk, gold, silver, and precious stones. . . . They drink milk in great quantities, but especially mares’ milk if they have it. . . . Their manners are partly praiseworthy, and partly detestable: for they are more obedient unto their lords and masters than any other clergy or lay people in the whole world.”

He then balances their virtues and vices, making out for them a character closely resembling that of the Turcomans and other nomadic tribes of our own day.

It appears that Friar Johannes returned to Italy, and that there, with some assistance, he wrote or dictated his plain unvarnished account of his travels in a *Libellus*, or small book in Latin. Of this manuscript, of which no doubt there were once many copies, we have never been able to obtain a sight. It seems now to be known only through the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincentius Belvacensis,* where it is inserted at full length, together

* The ‘*Speculum Historiale*’ was the compilation of Vincent de Beauvais, Latinized into Vincentius Belvacensis, a Dominican monk, a reader or preacher to St. Louis, who desired him to undertake different works. These works now form a considerable collection. In the 32nd and last book

with some slight information about their journey, which the author or editor, Vincentius, says he received from Simon de St. Quintin,* one of the four friars who had gone into Tartary by the south of the Caspian sea. From the '*Speculum Historiale*' Ramusio transferred all this matter, together with an Italian translation to follow the Latin text, into the second volume of his '*Raccolta di Navigazioni e Viaggi*,' which was printed at Venice in the year 1556. From this work of Ramusio, our own good compiler, Richard Hakluyt, copied the matter into the first volume of his '*Navigations and Discoveries*,' which was published at London in the year 1599. Hakluyt, who of course only transfers the Latin text, gives a good racy translation of his own; but he omits several passages which are given by Ramusio. From Ramusio or from Hakluyt all modern and indeed all existing accounts of Carpinì have been drawn.

A French writer of our own day, being determined to finish the good monk's story, says it appears that after his return from Tartary he devoted his life to the missions in the north of Europe; preached the gospel in Bohemia, Hungary, Norway, and Denmark, and died in the midst of these apostolical labours at a very advanced age; but we

of the '*Speculum Historiale*' the matter is wholly Simon de St. Quintin's.

Vincent de Beauvais makes a mixed relation, which he divides into fifty chapters, and this is the account known to us.

* M. d'Avezac made a diligent but unsuccessful search after the original manuscript of Simon de St. Quintin. See *Recueil de Voyages*, published by the Paris Geographical Society. We much doubt whether this monk ever left or wrote a manuscript of his Travels.

have looked in vain for any authority for these details. M. d'Avezac says that Carpini after his return spent three months at Lyons with the pope, and shortly after that time was raised to the dignity of Archbishop of Antivari in Dalmatia.* This would have been to place the good monk in a pleasant and picturesque country immediately opposite to the place of his birth, and almost within sight of Monte Gargano, on whose inner slope the village of Carpino lies. But the fact of his high promotion seems to stand in need of confirmation.

A few words may be said of the journey of St. Quintin, Asceline, and their companions who had been ordered to proceed by the south of the Caspian. These four Dominicans were either less discreet or much less fortunate than the Franciscans. The first Tartar chiefs they met were highly incensed by their declaring the pope to be the vicegerent of Heaven and the spiritual chief of all mankind. "Since your pope," said these rough Tartars, "is so knowing a man, he doubtless knows that our great Khan is the son of God, invested by Heaven with the dominion of the earth!" The chiefs were quite furious at the monks for not bringing them rich presents: they called them Christian dogs,—nay, they called the pope himself a very dog. Greatly were the Dominicans horrified hereat; yet they did not lose their courage, but continued to pour bold words into the ear of their drogoman, who, no doubt, had too great a regard for his own safety to interpret

* *Recueil de Voyages, &c.*

literally to the Tartars all that was said to them by the monks. Enough, however, was expressed by words, or by the action and gesticulation of the Dominicans to provoke a universal shout that the Christian dogs ought to be killed. Luckily there arose a dispute about the best way of putting them to death. Some of the Tartars opined that in the first battle with the Christians they ought to be placed in front of the great Khan's army, and so made to fall under the swords or arrows of their own people; while others thought that the best mode of disposing of them would be to flay them alive where they stood, and then send their skins stuffed with hay to their master the pope. If this unpleasant process had been carried out we no doubt should have seen the stuffed monks, well preserved under glass-cases, in some church at Rome, and we should have found their names enrolled among those of saints and martyrs. But while the horse-eaters were debating, a gentle lady, wife to one of the Khans, interfered on the side of mercy, and it was finally determined that the monks should not be killed at all. They were even told that they might proceed into Central Tartary, and to the court of the Khan of Khans. But the Dominicans had had more than enough of the Tartars, and so they got them back towards Palestine as fast as they could.

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT five years after the return of Carpini, another adventurous monk was sent among the Tartars, with instructions to penetrate if possible as far as the interior of Cathay or China. This man was a more minute observer than his predecessor, and we have a more direct, a fuller, and in all respects a better account of his travels. William de Rubruquis was a friar of the Minorite or Franciscan order. Pits, in his curious work of *English Biography, or Lives of the Kings, Bishops, Apostolical men, and Writers of England*, claims him as a countryman; but though we should be proud to admit the claim, we cannot in any justice do so; it appears, on the contrary, pretty plain that he was a native of Brabant. His real name was Ruysbrock or Rysbruck, which, according to the fashion of the times, he Latinized into Rubruquis. He entered the cloisters early in life, and soon after finishing his noviciate and taking the major vows and being qualified as a priest, he went to the Holy Land. The recent successes of the fourth great Crusade under the French King Louis IX., afterwards canonized as St. Louis, had revived the hopes of the Christians of the West of regaining permanent possession of Jerusalem and the whole of Palestine. Fresh streams of pilgrims were flowing thither, and some of these counted upon settling in the Holy Land for life.

It appears, however, that before Rubruquis

reached the Syrian shore the devout French king had been defeated near Tunis, and made prisoner by the Mohammedans. Louis, however, was soon released upon paying a ransom and entering into a treaty with the Sultan; and he was in Palestine in 1253. Although the monkish envoys he had already sent in quest of Prester or priest John had returned to him with their very discouraging accounts, Louis could not discharge his imagination of that visionary personage, and being more anxious than ever to contract an alliance with that fancied Christian potentate, he resolved to send another mission in search of him. For his envoys he fixed upon Rubruquis, friar Bartholomew of Cremona, and a certain friar Andrew, whose country or birthplace is not named. Rubruquis, though the youngest of the three, appears to have been considered as the head of the mission. Before his departure Louis strictly enjoined him to write down everything he saw and heard among the Tartars; and by conscientiously obeying this order, Rubruquis brought back an immense deal of curious information on the subject of that nomadic people, which was new to Europe at the time, and which, after the lapse of six centuries, is still about the most correct and completest picture we possess of Tartar life; for the wandering tribes of that great race, which occupies so large a portion of the globe, have, on the whole, changed but little since the thirteenth century; and in that long intervening time few travellers have been among them in their native wilds.

After spending a short time at Constantinople among the Greek Christians, whose schism gave him so much offence that he says not a word about

them or about their beautiful city, Rubruquis with his companions took shipping and entered the Pontus, the Euxine, or as it is now more generally called, the Black Sea, on the 9th day of May, 1253. He tells us that he had made at Constantinople a good provision of dried fruits, Muscat wines and delicate biscuits, wherewith to make presents to the Tartars, "who never look with a friendly eye upon those who go to them empty-handed." On the 21st of May, he safely landed at Soldaia, now Soudac or Soujac in the Crimea, near Cherson (where Howard the philanthropist died in 1790). But here his troubles began.

King Louis, being uncertain how the mission might succeed, had instructed Rubruquis and his companions to give out that they were travelling on their own account, as private missionaries. The monks had so represented themselves; but at Soldaia people would not believe them, and hit upon the true story,—that they were sent as ambassadors from the Christians in the Holy Land. Rubruquis, faithful to his instructions, said that they were going entirely on their own account in search of a great Tartar king named Sartach, whom they understood to be a Christian, and a foe to the Mohammedans. Yet upon being assured that the Tartars would not grant a passage through their country to any strangers except such as were sent ambassadors from kings, the monk was obliged to confess that he was the bearer of letters from the king his master to the great and royal Sartach. "Then," says the friar, "they told me many good things concerning the said Sartach, which I did not find afterwards to be true." According to his own account he and his companions were received very

graciously ; but it should appear from the treatment they afterwards met with, that their presents were not considered sufficiently valuable, and that the Tartars could not believe that much consideration was due to men that had nothing to give but dried fruits, sweet wine, and a few delicate biscuits. The monks, indeed, when pressed on later occasions for richer offerings, as gold and silver, or jewels and precious raiment, pleaded that by the rules of their order they were prohibited from possessing such things — that they were espoused to poverty by a vow, and could neither give nor receive worldly riches ; but this confession evidently did not raise them in the estimation of the Tartars. The old town of the Chersonesus is described as a place of great trade.

“ Here,” says Rubruquis, “ all merchants land who come from Constantinople, on their way to the north, and they embark here again on their return from Muscovy : they bring with them silks, cotton cloths, other manufactured stuffs, and aromatic spices ; and these they exchange at Soldaia for ermines, martens, and other valuable furs, which are brought by the traders from Muscovy and Siberia.”

Rubruquis and his companions met with a very kind and hospitable reception from the merchants, who were for the most part Christians. There was a bishop who had a cathedral church and chapter in the town.

The monks renewed their journey by land in the early part of the month of June, having six covered carts drawn by oxen, and five riding horses. Their party consisted of seven men, for they had hired a drogoman or interpreter, and had purchased a slave named Nicholas, at Constantinople, and the Tartars

of Soldaia had allowed them to take two men to drive their carts and have care of their horses and oxen. Between Soldaia and Cherson they found several castles on the sea-shore occupied by Goths who spoke a Teutonic language. These castles of the Goths, first mentioned by Rubruquis, were noticed eighty years later by the Venetian traveller Barbaro; and Busbeck or Busbequius conversed with some of these Goths from the Crimea at Constantinople in 1562, and drew up a vocabulary of their language.

Resuming their journey, our monks presently came to the narrow isthmus which connects the Crimea or Chersonesus with the continent. Here they found a deep ditch or trench dug right across the isthmus from sea to sea, and a custom-house for levying duties, principally on salt, for which there was a large demand among the inland dwelling Tartars.

On the third day of their journey from Soldaia, the monks fell in with the wandering Tartars, and Rubruquis thought himself "entered into a new world." He launches at once into a description of the novelties which most struck him. These Tartars had no permanent city, no fixed residence of any kind, and no knowledge of a future state of existence. They divided all Scythia among them, and each leader, according to the number of his followers, knew the boundaries of his pastures, and the course he ought to follow. In fact their numerous tribes at this period wandered as masters over an immense extent of country, the greater portion of which was in Asia, though a large part of north-eastern Europe was also subject to them. Their movable habitations, and their flocks and

herds were found from the borders of China as far as the left bank of the Danube. In summer they travelled towards the mountains, or the cooler countries of the north; in the winter they descended to the plains, or sought the warmer regions of the south. Wherever they went they carried their all with them, leaving scarcely a trace of their residence or existence in the places they quitted. The districts swarming with human population and sheep and cattle to-day, would be a complete desert to-morrow. Their houses, if such they could be called, went upon wheels, and were drawn from place to place by oxen. They were made of watted rods, and wicker-work, and in form were not much unlike our common beehives, being circular and rounded off at top. But some of these travelling abodes were so large and ponderous that it required a whole herd of animals to draw them slowly along. The friar sometimes counted as many as twenty-two bullocks put to one house, in one row, according to the breadth of the waggon, and other eleven before these. He says that he once measured the distance between the wheel-ruts of one of these great house-bearing waggons, and found it to be twenty feet, and that when the house was upon the waggon it spread beyond the wheels at least five feet on each side. The houses were so constructed that at the end of a journey they could easily be taken off the waggons and set down on the ground. Rubruquis much regrets his inability to draw.

“Some of the married ladies,” he says, “have most beautiful waggons made for themselves, which I cannot describe without the aid of designing, and which I would have drawn for your majesty if I had been able.”

One Mohal, a rich Tartar, had as many as a hundred of these waggon-houses, in which he carried about his many wives, his children, and all their female attendants. The station of one of these Tartars appeared by itself like a town,—but one in which there were very few men. The doors of the movable houses were always turned to face the south; and the waggons on which they had been carried, and their attendant carts, were drawn up in two compact lines, one in front, and the other in rear of the habitations. Within the houses there were always certain lares or household gods, which were nothing but little images or puppets made of felt. Near the door of every house there was a figure with a cow's udder, the guardian spirit of the women who milked the kine; and opposite to it was another figure having the udder of a mare—the tutelar divinity of the men who milked the more spirited animals. According to Tartar morality it was an unpardonable effeminacy for a man to milk a cow, and for a woman to milk a mare was equally unseemly. Among them the grand distinction between the two sexes lay in this—man was a mare-milker, woman a cow-milker.

The ladies wore a strange head-dress, called by our friar a *botta*, or tub, or butt.

“It is a head-dress, light and hollow, being made of the bark of trees or other light material, from which rises a square sharp spire more than a cubit in length, fashioned like a pinnacle. [This must have somewhat resembled the horn which is often referred to in Scripture, and which is still worn by the women of Mount Lebanon.] It is covered over with a piece of rich silk, and on the top of the spire they put a bunch of quills or slender canes, a cubit long and more, which they beautify at the top with peacock's feathers, and round about all

the length thereof with the feathers of a mallard's tail, and with precious stones also. Hereupon, when a great company of such gentlewomen ride together, and are beheld afar off, they seem to be soldiers with helmets on their heads, carrying their lances upright; for the said Botta appeareth like an helmet with a lance over it. All the women sit on horseback, bestriding their horses like men: and they bind their hoods or gowns about their waists with a sky-coloured silk scarf, and with another scarf they gird them about their breasts; and they bind also a piece of white silk, like a muffler or mask, under their eyes, reaching down unto the breast. These gentlewomen are exceeding fat, and the lesser their noses be, the fairer they are esteemed: they daub over their sweet faces too with grease shamefully: and they never lie in bed for their travail of childbirth."

Rubruquis complains at a very early stage of his journey of the quality and small quantity of food allowed him by the Tartars, and soon after of the rapid rate at which they made him travel. He says they ate all sorts of flesh, even that of animals dead by disease. He seems, however, to have conquered his aversion to horse-flesh, and he informs us that the sausages of the Tartars, made of the intestines of horses, were better than pork sausages.

One might suppose, from the description he gives of his equitation, that the Tartars had intended to make him a cook, in the manner described by Hudibras.*

With their train of waggons they travelled for several weeks across the Steppes which separate the Dnieper from the Tanaïs, or river Don. Rubruquis says that they kept always to the East, crossing immense desert plains, with nothing to be seen but earth and sky, and here and there the tumuli

* Canto ii. part i.

of the Comans. As they advanced they were much importuned by the wandering Tartars for presents.

"They were continually begging," says our friar of the mendicant order, "begging our bread for their young brats, and wondering at all things which they saw about our servants, as their knives, gloves, purses, and points, and desiring to have them. I excused myself that we had a long way to travel, and that we must in nowise so soon deprive ourselves of things necessary to finish so long a journey. Then they said that I was a very varlet. True it is they took nothing by force from me: howbeit they will beg that which they see very importunately and shamelessly. If a man gives them anything, it may be regarded as thrown away, for they have no gratitude; and as they look upon themselves as the lords and masters of the earth, they think that no man ought to refuse them anything: yet, if one gives them nothing, and afterwards stands in need of their assistance, they will not give it. All that they gave us was some of their sour buttermilk, called Apran: and very sour it was."

One morning they met the waggons of the great Tartar chief Zagathai, laden with their houses, and travelling along; "and verily," says our monk, "I thought that a great city was coming to meet us." He was also astonished at the prodigious droves of oxen and horses, and the immense flocks of sheep, which were travelling with the houses. The moving city was brought to a halt near to some sweet running water, and, as soon as the houses were placed in order upon the ground, an interpreter waited upon the monks from the great Zagathai. The first verb this linguist conjugated was the verb to give. What had the strangers to give to the Great Khan? What did they intend to

give to his drogoman? For his own share he hoped that they would give him not only some choice food and drink, but some goodly raiments, as a recompense for the trouble he must undergo in interpreting for them. The monks, who appear to have dreaded being stripped naked before they got to the presence of the Great Khan, again pleaded the rules of their order and their vow of poverty. When they showed him a flagon of wine, and a basket of biscuits, and a basket of dried apples and other dried fruits, he sneered at the offering, and told them that they ought to have provided themselves with some rich stuffs. They were, however, admitted to the presence of Zagathai, who was sitting on a sort of bed, with a musical instrument in his hand, and with one of his wives sitting by his side. Rubruquis, who had not yet got accustomed to the Tartar feature, says he really thought that the great lady had cut off her nose, so flat was it on the face; or to use his own words,—“I verily think she had cut and pared her nose between the eyes, that she might seem to be more flat and saddle-nosed: for she had left herself no nose at all in that place, having anointed the very same place with a black ointment, and her eyebrows also; which sight seemed most ugly in our eyes.” When the monks presented their humble offering, Zagathai distributed the dried fruit, the biscuits, and the sweet wine among his men, who had met in his house to drink. He asked Rubruquis whether he would drink *Cosmos*, or fermented milk of mares? For the Russian, Greek, and Nestorian Christians, that were living among or that had communication with these Tartars, would on no account drink their liquor, holding *Cosmos* as an

heathenish abomination. Our monk very wisely replied that for the present he had drink of his own, but that when it was finished he would drink Cosmos. Though so much addicted to mares' milk, these Tartars seem to have had no dislike to the good monk's sweet wine. On one occasion, when claiming hospitality, he was asked as usual for a present beforehand. He gave the master of the house one bottle of wine: this the Tartar emptied in a trice, and then demanded another bottle—"because," said he, "a man never enters another man's house on one leg."

At times the poor monks found the Tartars living on short commons. In this condition the pagans were meek and gentle, but when their stomachs were well-lined with horse-flesh they were haughty and fierce. Merry Matthew Prior described the philosophy of the thing some five hundred years after the time of Rubruquis.

Was ever Tartar fierce or cruel
Upon the strength of water-gruel?
But who can stand his rage and force
When first he rides, then eats his horse?*

The monks tarried ten days with the horde of Zagathai, where they could get hardly anything to eat or drink. "Truly," says Rubruquis, "if it had not been for the grace of God and the biscuits we brought with us, we had perished there." From this inhospitable station they travelled directly north until they came to the isthmus of Precop. Their attendants now pilfered them largely; but they came among a more generous Tartar horde, who, in return for a basket of fruit and biscuit,

* Alma.

gave them a goat and a great many bladders full of milk, and lent them oxen to draw on their carts. They now travelled directly eastward, having the sea of Asoph on their right hand. For ten days they travelled through a perfect desert, seeing no human being, no flocks or herds, and finding nothing conducive to their comfort or use, except water in two small rivers, and in some ditches dug on purpose. They scarcely saw a tree or a stone, but the pasture is described as being excellent. Yet they were happier in this loneliness than in the society they afterwards found.

“So long as we travelled in the desert,” says Father William, “matters were passably well with us, but I cannot express the plagues and troubles we had to encounter among the dwellings of the Tartars; for our guide would have us give presents to every one of the Tartar chiefs, which we were unable to afford, and we were eight persons in all continually using our provisions, as the three Tartars now with us insisted that we should feed them; and the flesh which had been given us was far from being sufficient, and there was none that we could get by buying. And while we sat under the shadow of our carts to shelter us from the extreme heat of the sun, the Tartars would intrude into our company, and even tread upon us, that they might see what we had.”

They were also very unmannerly in other particulars. On the feast of St. Mary Magdalen—the 22nd of July—they reached the bank of the mighty river Tanaïs or Don, which is described as being at that point as broad as the river Seine at Paris, and as separating Europe from Asia, as the Nile separates Asia from Africa. Here they found some fish, flesh, and dry bread, to their great contentment. Quitting the station on the river bank

they plunged again into a desert. They lost their way, and could find no man and no sign to set them right. But on the fourth day they found some people, upon which they "rejoiced like mariners who had escaped from a tempest into a safe harbour." On the second of the Kalends of August they reached the temporary residence of the great Sartach, of whom they were in search. He was encamped within three days' journey of the river Volga, and his court appeared to the monks very large and magnificent; as he had six wives, and his eldest son three, and as each of these ladies had a great house, like those already described, and several smaller houses, and as there were not fewer than two hundred chest-carts. These carts carried enormous square chests, which might be called the family store-room and treasury, for in them were deposited the clothes, household goods and chattels, and all their owner's valuables; they were well smeared over with suet or sheep's milk butter, to keep out the rain, and were fancifully painted, and in parts ornamented with feathers: unlike the houses, they were never taken off their wheels. The carts to which they were fixed were much higher from the ground than the waggons that carried the dwelling-houses; and instead of being drawn by oxen they were drawn by tall camels. They could thus ford the smaller rivers of Asia, without injuring or wetting the contents of the chest. Before they could gain admittance at court the monks were obliged to wait upon a great man who bore the official title of "The Gate of the Lord." Here there was anger on one side and dismay on the other, the Gate being much offended at the monks having nothing to give to the Lord.

Rubruquis and his two friends were, however, admitted to the presence of Sartach, who sat majestically, having music and dancing performed before him. Father William pleaded the old excuse of monastic poverty, and Sartach admitted it much more readily than any of his subjects had done. He courteously replied that being monks, they acted well in observing their vow; that he stood in no need of anything, and that he would freely give them such things as they might need. He then made them sit down on their hams, and drink of his own milk; and afterwards desired them to recite a benediction, which they did. As Rubruquis wrote the account of his travels for the special perusal of Louis IX., who had employed him, he did not spare occasional compliments. He says—

“Sartach inquired who was the greatest sovereign among the Franks? To which I answered, the Emperor, if he could enjoy his dominions in peace. ‘Not so,’ said he, ‘but the King of France.’ For he had heard of your majesty from the Lord Baldwin of Hainault. I found also at this court one of the Knights Templars, who had been at Cyprus, and had made a report of all that he had seen there concerning your majesty.”

On the following morning the monks were ordered to return to court, and carry with them the letters from King Louis, their books and sacerdotal vestments. They loaded one cart with their books and mass-dresses, and another with wine, biscuits, and dried fruits. That terrible man, “the Gate of the Lord,” met them before they came to Sartach’s threshold, and causing all their books and vestments to be spread out before them, he asked the monks whether they meant to bestow all these

things upon his master. Rubruquis was sorely disquieted. He says—

“A multitude of Tartars, Christians, and Mohammedans, were at the time gathered round us on horseback, and I was grieved and terrified by this question; but dissembling as well as I could, I said, that we humbly requested his lord and master to accept our bread, wine, and fruits, not as a present, for it was too mean, but as a benevolence, lest we should seem to have come empty handed; but that touching our vestments they were holy, and could not lawfully be touched or used by any except consecrated priests.” “We were then,” he continues, “commanded to array ourselves in our sacred vestments, that we might appear in them before his lord. And putting on our precious ornaments, I took a rich cushion in my arms, and upon it the Bible I had from your majesty, and the beautiful psalter, adorned with rare paintings, which the queen bestowed upon me.* My companions carried the missal and a crucifix; and the clerk, clothed in his surplice, carried a censer in his hand. In this order we presented ourselves, and the felt hanging before the Lord’s door being withdrawn, we appeared in his presence. The clerk and interpreter were ordered to make three prostrations, but from this humiliation we, the monks, were exempted. We were, however, admonished to be exceedingly careful in going in and out of the Lord Sartach’s dwelling, not to touch the threshold of his door; and likewise we were desired to sing a Benedicite or prayer for their Lord; and accordingly we entered singing the *Salve Regina*. Immediately within the door there stood a bench or table covered with cosmos and drinking cups. All Sartach’s wives were assembled; and the Mohals or great Tartars pressing in along with us, caused us much discomfort.”

Sartach took the censer with incense in his hand, and examined it closely. The chief wife minutely

* Marguerite of Provence, the only wife of Louis IX., had accompanied her husband on his unfortunate Crusade.

inspected the pictured psalter. The letters of King Louis were delivered, and interpreted by some Armenian priests; and when Sartach had heard them read he graciously accepted the bread, wine, and fruits, and permitted the monks to carry back their books and vestments to their own lodging. "All this," says Rubruquis, "happened on the festival of Saint Peter ad Vincula." [This festival occurs on the first of August.]

By this time the monks had discovered that Sartach's imputed Christianity was all a dream. Yet the Tartars were very desirous of getting and keeping the holy books and vestments; and on the very day after the grand audience the monks were told that they must deliver up all these things. Rubruquis secreted the Bible and some other books, on which he set great store, but he did not venture to abstract the psalter, because it had attracted so much notice by its beautifully gilded illuminations. For the space of four days which they spent in the court of Sartach, the monks had no victuals allowed them, and got nothing from that mighty chief except once a cup a-piece of fermented mare's milk. These Tartars were as inhospitable on the Don and Volga in the thirteenth century, as were their descendants in China at the end of the eighteenth century, when a fat Dutch ambassador (Van Braam) was wasted away to a shadow before he could get from the coast to Peking.

The monks were allowed to proceed to the much grander court of Baatu, the father of Sartach; but as they had now to travel post in Tartar fashion they were obliged to leave their carts behind them, and their slaves to take care of their carts or the little property in them. After running many great

risks of being robbed and murdered, or starved to death in the wilderness—which last catastrophe would have happened but for the precious Constantinopolitan biscuit,—they reached the encampment of Baatu on the banks of the Volga, and were greatly astonished at the magnificent appearance of it, as his wheel-houses and tents were so numerous as to look like an immense city, and as there were great numbers of people ranging about the country, for three or four leagues all round the camp. They were equally astonished at the sublime aspect of the Volga. It struck Rubruquis as being the mightiest river he had ever seen, and he much marvelled from what regions of the globe such a world of waters could descend. He was correctly informed that the Volga flowed into an enormous lake or inland sea (the Caspian), which was entirely surrounded by mountains and plains, having no communication with the ocean, or with any other sea. He was told that this lake or sea was so vast that it took four months to travel all round it.

At the camp or court of Baatu the etiquette was much more starch and severe ; and although Father William tries hard to cover over the fact, it is pretty evident that he was made to perform the humiliating, and in his eyes, idolatrous ceremony of the kotoo. He says :—

“ There we stood in our habit, bare-footed and bare-headed, and were a great and strange spectacle in their eyes. Indeed, friar John de Plano Carpini had been there before my coming : howbeit, because he was the pope's messenger, he had changed his monastic habit that he might not be contemned. Then were we brought into the very midst of the tent ; neither required they

of us to do any reverence by bowing our knees, as they use to do of other messengers. We stood therefore before Baatu, for the space wherein a man might have rehearsed the psalm *Miserere mei Deus*: and there was great silence kept of all men. Baatu himself sate upon a seat long and broad like unto a bed, gilt all over, with three steps to ascend thereto, and one of his ladies sat beside him. The men there assembled sat down, scattering, some on the right hand of the said lady and some on the left. . . . Also, at the very entrance of the tent stood a bench, furnished with cosmos, and with stately great cups of silver and gold, being richly set with precious stones. Baatu beheld us earnestly, and we him; and he seemed to me to resemble in personage Monsieur John de Beaumont, whose soul resteth in peace. And he had a fresh ruddy colour in his countenance."

The Great Baatu could enter into no negotiations with them, but gave them to understand, through one of his officers, that they must continue their journey until they came to Manchu-Khan, the great Tartar Emperor, who was to be found somewhere in the direction of China. They were told at the same time that their clerk must not go with them, but return immediately to the court of Satch. The monks begged and remonstrated, but they were commanded to be silent, for as the great Baatu had given the order it must be obeyed. As the poor clerk had a little money—which appears to have been of very little use in these regions—he gave the greater part of it to the monks, and then sorrowfully quitted them. Baatu packed up his houses on his waggons, and descended the Volga in quest of pastures new. Rubruquis and his companions travelled with him for five weeks along the banks of that great river, being sadly pinched all the while, and so much famished as even to weep.

They walked on foot the whole of this way. They then left the Volga and the inhospitable lord, and struck away for the river Jaïk or Ural, having the broad Caspian on one side of them. At this part of their journey they were mounted on horseback, and made to ride like flying Tartar couriers, being obliged to keep their horses almost constantly at full gallop, in order not to be left behind in the desert by their conductors.

This breakneck speed was ill-suited to the previous sedentary slow habits and measured steps of Franciscan friars. Moreover, the unkind Tartars generally gave them the worst horses. The youth and good constitution of Father William were in his favour; yet was it indeed no ordinary exploit for a religious recluse, who, in all probability, had never been on the back of a horse before, and who says of himself that he was corpulent and heavy, to keep up with these flying pagans, who might almost be said to have been born on horseback. He says —“ They, however, always provided me with a strong horse, but whether his pace chanced to be hard or gentle was all one to them, and I durst utter no complaint.” Like all equestrians, these Tartar Abipones had a great contempt for men that could not ride well, and live day and night in the saddle; but the monks' patience and powers of endurance gradually won their respect. “ In the beginning of our riding,” says Father William, “ our guides disdained us exceedingly, and seemed quite indignant at being obliged to take charge of such base fellows as they held us to be; but they afterwards behaved much better.” Where they fell in with an encampment they changed their horses, but this did not happen more than two or three

times a day ; and yet the monk says that as well as he could guess they went daily about as far as it is from Paris to Orleans, and sometimes farther. At other times, however, they travelled two or three days together without finding any encampment, or people or horses ; and then they were constrained to moderate their pace. Scattered here and there in the wide countries he was traversing Rubruquis found a few real Christians,—chiefly Hungarians, who had been carried off during the incursions of the Tartars into Europe. From these men the monks received great kindness. One of them understood Latin and psalm-singing, and being able to sing with a very loud voice, he was in great request at funerals. One day as they were riding along they met a man who saluted them with the *Salvete Domini*. Upon making inquiry they found that this was a native of a remote part of Asia who had learned the rudiments of Christianity from a Minorite friar in Hungary, where he had once been with a Tartar army.

“These men,” says Father William, “were a great comfort to us, for they supplied us with flesh and cosmos. They entreated us to give them some books, and it did grieve me much that we could not comply, having now only one Bible and a breviary. But I made them bring me some ink and paper, and I copied for them the hours of the blessed Virgin and the office for the dead.”

As he went farther on, he met with people in greater numbers professing themselves Nestorian Christians ; but these, in sober truth, were little better than the idolators among whom they lived. It is scarcely necessary to say that Prester John and the great united Christian community he was in search of were nowhere to be found or even heard

of. They were as invisible as the Hyperboreans of Herodotus, as undiscoverable as the Atalantis of Plato.

In his intercourse with the Tartars, Rubruquis zealously attempted the task of conversion; and those wanderers appear at the time to have been so tolerant, and to have had so much respect for many of the forms and ceremonies of the Catholic Church, that his mission in this way might not have proved altogether unsuccessful. But Rubruquis was ignorant of their language, and very unfortunate in the drogoman or interpreter he had brought with him from Constantinople. This fellow had no taste for sermons,

“And thus,” says the monk, “it caused me great chagrin when I wished to address to them a few words of edification, to hear my foolish interpreter say unto me, ‘You shall not make me preach to-day; I understood nothing of all you tell me!’” “And therein,” adds the friar, “he spoke the truth; for afterwards, as I began to understand a little of their tongue, I discovered that when I told him one thing, he would say quite differently, and whatever chanced to come uppermost in his senseless mind. Therefore, seeing it was of no use to talk or preach, I held my tongue.”

This drogoman was a tolerably fair representative of the interpreters who have in our own days served the English and other European ambassadors at Constantinople in all their negotiations and conferences with the Ottoman Porte. “*Traduttori son traditori*.—Translators are traitors,” says the old Italian proverb, which in a hundred important political cases has been strictly applicable to the drogomanery of Constantinople. Rubruquis’s drogoman, moreover, grew so fond of fermented mare’s-

milk that he was generally intoxicated. His employer does not mention him as being of the Greek Church ; but if he were of that communion his religious scruples might have rendered him an unwilling translator, in religious matters, to a monk of the Roman Church.

The monks, however, found the Tartars very fond of the symbol of the Cross, and of being blessed in the Catholic fashion. Wherever they went they were asked for their Benedicite. With the name of the great head of the Roman Church the nomadic tribes were well acquainted ; his name and fame had reached the farthest corners of the east : but these Tartars thought that the pope was like the Delhi Lama of Thibet who never dies ; or they had much the same notion as to the Pontiff's longevity that is said to have been entertained by certain Asiatics of our own day with regard to the age of the East India Company, which honourable body corporate they fancied to be one very old woman. Some of the Tartars asked Rubruquis if it were indeed true that the pope was five hundred years old ! They likewise inquired whether in the European countries the monks came from, there was an abundance of sheep, oxen, and horses ? Their minute inquiries on this head, and the eagerness they showed for the acquisition of wealth made him apprehend (what indeed at the time was not altogether unlikely), that their numerous hordes might roll on from the Danube to the Tiber, the Seine, and the Rhine, pillaging and devastating the best parts of Christendom.

Meanwhile the monks proceeded on their journey. Of hunger and thirst, cold and fatigue, there was no end. They esteemed themselves fortunate, when

at the end of a long exhausting day's ride they got a little mutton broth to drink, or the neck of an old ram to eat. Oft times they were obliged to eat their meat almost raw, for want of fuel—"especially," says Rubruquis, "when we were benighted and obliged to pass the night in the plains, forasmuch as we could not conveniently gather horse or cow-dung to make a fire, and we seldom found any other fuel, except a few thorns here and there, and in a few rare woods on the banks of some rivers." It is curious that none of these early travellers make any mention of tea, the use of which refreshing beverage was found common all through Tartary a few centuries later.* In the time of honest John Bell of Antermoney the Tartars mixed their tea with mutton fat or grease. In our own days the use of the Chinese plant is common to all the Turcoman and other wandering tribes, and extends all across the deserts of Sakars and Karakum to the frontiers of Persia, where it ceases altogether, and its place is supplied by coffee. Indeed a great part of Asia might be divided into coffee-drinking Asia and tea-drinking Asia. The berry and the plant are never used in one and the same country.

In places where horses were scarce, two of our monks were sometimes obliged to ride on one animal, and to keep him up "with great beating and whipping." Rubruquis gives but few dates, and in the printed copies of his travels there are many obvious errors in the dates which are given. When he and his companions had travelled some months, and were almost exhausted by fatigue, long fasting,

* "The Tartar slaves fill their bellies with thick water, and are therewithal contented. They will neither eat mice with long tails, nor any kind of mice with short tails."

and all manner of privations, the Tartars told them that they had yet a journey of four more months to perform before they could reach the court of Manchu-Khan; and exaggerating in Oriental fashion the severity of climate which is felt in many parts of the table land in Central Asia, they added that, in the regions through which they would have to pass if they went onward, the cold was so intense that it split rocks and trees. "Can you," said they, "support this?" "By God's help we may!" said Rubruquis, answering for himself and his companions; and so on they went.

The Pagans, however, had the kindness to lend the monks some of their sheepskin dresses, which kept out the cold pretty well. Although the figure of a corpulent heavy Franciscan friar wrapped up in sheepskin which half concealed the dress of his order, and riding on a Tartar saddle, may be somewhat ludicrous in the eye of fancy, there is really a moral sublimity in the total sacrifice of self, and the readiness with which Rubruquis braves all dangers and devotes himself to the discharge of his mission. The good man is upheld at once by the enterprising spirit of a traveller, by his regard for his Order, and by the religious faith that is in him. When the perils of the way are exceedingly great he keeps up his heart with prayer and psalm singing. He never flinches: others may have turned back in terror, but he will go onward though he should die in the desert. He seldom utters a complaint; and let the Pagans treat him as barbarously as they may, he still prays and hopes that their souls will be saved, and that the humanizing faith may some day be established in these rude and inhospitable countries. In the greatest depths

of his suffering he carefully observes whatever he sees and hears, and seems never to forget or neglect the instructions he had received from King Louis. Considering his profession and the time in which he lives, he is wonderfully free of superstition. Of those miracles, and marvels, and special and direct interferences of the saints, and the efficacy of relics in disarming the rage of wild beasts, in calming the tempest, and in averting all dangers, which so abound in the accounts of the Jesuit missionaries who travelled in Tartary and China in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there is scarcely a trace in the narrative of this honest Franciscan friar of the thirteenth century.

At last, on Saint Stephen's day—the 26th of December—the monks came to a great plain, on which not the smallest inequality of surface was to be seen, and the next day they arrived at the court of the great Khan, where they were thrust into a small dirty hovel. Rubruquis went out barefooted to look about him. St. Francis, the founder of his order, from the day of his entering into religion, had never worn shoes, and the rules of his order are strictly prohibitory of shirts, shoes, and stockings. At this day no good Minorite friar will wear anything on his feet except rude open leather sandals. The sight of Rubruquis's naked feet drew round him a crowd of Tartars, who gazed on him as a monster or a madman. Some of them asked him whether he wished to lose his feet by the cold and frost? And, in truth, during the day, chilblains began to make their appearance, and his feet were so frost-bitten that he was obliged thenceforward to cover those extremities with a pair of Tartar leggings made of felt or horse hair. But to return to

his first perambulation through the court of the great Khan, he soon saw a small house with a little cross at the top, at which he greatly rejoiced, supposing that there might be some Christians within. Entering boldly, he found an altar well furnished, having a golden cross adorned with images of our Saviour, the Virgin, St. John the Baptist, and two angels, the lines of their bodies and garments being formed with small pearls : and on the altar was a large silver cross, ornamented with precious stones, and a lamp with eight lights was burning before the altar. Sitting beside the altar was an Armenian monk, somewhat black and lean, clad in a rough hairy coat to the middle of the leg, above which was a coarse black cloak, furred with spotted skins ; and he was girded with iron under his hair-cloth.

" Before saluting the monk," continues Father William, " we fell flat on the earth, singing '*Salve Regina*' and other hymns, and the monk joined in our prayers. These being ended, we sat down beside the monk, who had a small fire before him in a pan. He told us that he had come to those parts a month before us, being a hermit in the territories of Jerusalem, who had been warned in a vision to go to the great prince of the Tartars."

After some conversation with the Armenian they returned to their miserable lodging and made themselves some mutton broth. In the meantime their guide and his companions were getting drunk at court, on fermented mare's milk, taking no care of them.

On the 5th day of January the travellers were presented at court, where they were made to perform the kotoo and other humiliating ceremonies. The grand khan was seated upon a couch or bed,

covered with a spotted skin, bright and shining. (What the worthy monk calls a bed was probably much the same piece of furniture still used as a seat by the Turkish sultan when he gives an audience of ceremony, and which is something between a post-bed and a sofa). The Khan is described as "a flat-nosed man of middle stature, about forty-five years of age." One of his wives, a pretty little young woman, sat beside him; and one of his daughters, a hard favoured young woman, sat with some younger children on another couch. Before proceeding to business, Manchu invited the monks to drink. They took sparingly of the liquor, but their roguish interpreter, whose taste for fermented mare's milk had still kept increasing, took his place by the sideboard, and drank to excess. After a long interval, during which the khan amused himself with some falcons and other birds, the monks were commanded to bend the knee again and speak. The khan had for his interpreter a Nestorian priest. Rubruquis says that he explained by means of his tippling drogoman why he had come so far in search of the khans; entreated for permission to stay and teach his holy religion to both court and people; and stated, that though he had brought no wealthy presents or earthly goods with him, he could render heavenly services. He entreated that he would at least be pleased to permit them to remain where they were till the cold season should be passed, as one of the monks was so weak that he could no longer travel on horseback without danger to his life. The khan of khans replied—"Even as the sun spreads his beams everywhere, so our power and that of Baatu extend to all places, so that we have no need of your gold and silver." "Thus

far," says our friar with much simplicity, "I understood my interpreter, but further I could not make out any perfect sentence; whereby I found he was drunk, and Manchu-Khan himself was drunk also, as I thought; and therefore I held my peace."

One of the khan's secretaries and his interpreter became very inquisitive about the wealth of the kingdom of France, as if the Tartars intended to make it all their own. "Truly," says Father William, "I had much ado to bridle my indignation at their presumptuous boasting." In conducting them back to their miserable lodging the interpreter told the monks that Manchu-Khan gave them permission to stay two months till the extreme cold should be passed; and that they might either go ten days' journey forward to the great city of Kara-Corum, or remain with the court. Rubruquis made answer—"May God preserve Manchu-Khan, and grant him a long and happy life! We have found here a good monk, whom we think to be a holy man, and we would fain stay where we are and pray along with him for the khan's prosperity." The greedy interpreter left them hungry and cold, and before he went he begged a carpet from them, which they must have greatly needed themselves. "But," says the patient monk, "we gave him the carpet, and so he departed in peace: and when night came we procured some food and a little fuel."

Rubruquis soon discovered that the Armenian monk had no very orthodox notion of religion, and that the people about the court of Manchu, like those he had met with at the court of Sartach and elsewhere, cared very little for the true faith. Their tolerance arose in good part out of indif-

ference; though he places the Nestorian Christian priests they were acquainted with in the rank of conjurors, fortune-tellers, and quack doctors; and the conduct of these priests was not calculated to elevate them or the religion they professed, in the estimation of the Tartars. Rubruquis found these Nestorians pretending to be in possession of the faculty of working miracles, and curing diseases only by administering holy water and exhibiting the crucifix to the sick. But, on looking into the matter, he discovered to his astonishment and horror that they mixed rhubarb with the holy water, which they gave their patients to drink in copious doses; that they carried lances, and swords half drawn out of their sheaths, as well as the cross, to the side of the sick bed; and that, in short, in all their religious ceremonies, they mingled Tartar rites and Pagan superstitions with corrupted observances of the Christian church. He endeavoured to impress on the minds of these priests that they were acting very wickedly in all this; but he could not convince them or turn them from the evil of their ways. He offered to prepare some holy water according to the rites of the Church of Rome; but they told him it would have no effect upon the faith and bowels of the Tartars unless it were mixed with the rhubarb powder.

Our European friars continued to fare very hard; the weather was excessively cold; their food scanty, and their hut so small that they could scarcely stand up in it; neither could they open their books to read on account of the smoke, if they lighted a fire, and on account of the cold if they had no fire. They were, however, removed to a somewhat better lodging, and the Lord of the Earth sent them three

rough skin coats, for which they were right thankful. Greatly were they scandalized when called upon to sing psalms in the presence of the khan's chief wife, for that royal lady got very drunk, and most of the Nestorians did the same, even in their chapel; and after psalms they devoured the carcase of a sheep and some fish like large carp, which they ate without bread or salt. The chief of the Nestorian priests was a very great drunkard; and he and his companions were accustomed to go on certain days from house to house to bless the new made Cosmos, and to drink of it and howl. The Armenian monk was not much better than the Nestorians.

"Indeed," says Rubruquis, "I learned afterwards, when I came to his own country, on my return from Tartary, that he was no priest at all, but only an errant weaver. . . . In many things his conduct did much displease me, for he caused to be made for himself a folding chair, such as our bishops use, and gloves, and a cap of peacock's feathers with a small gold cross upon it; but I was well pleased with the cross. . . . He was very presumptuous in speech, and was present at many of the vain and idolatrous rites of the Nestorians, and had many other vanities besides. Yet we joined his society for the honour of the cross, as he had a banner full of crosses set upon a great cane as long as a lance, and we carried this aloft among all the tents of the Tartars, singing *Vexilla regis prodeant*, to the great grief of the Mohammedans, who were envious of our favour at court."

One day the Pagan Tartars, the Mohammedans, —of whom many had already penetrated into this part of Asia—and the Christians, were assembled, by order of Manchu-Khan, to debate in public on the merits of their respective faiths. Rubruquis

took a foremost part in this debate; but, owing probably to the incurable habits of his interpreter, he seems to have made no converts, and indeed to have produced very little impression. He was more particularly pitted against a Cathayan or Chinese, who said, "Fools say there is but one God, but wise men say there are many gods," and who appears to have been as conceited and pragmatical as any mandarin of our own times. The meeting, however, broke up without any annoyance or quarrel, for when all parties had spoken, they all drank together most copiously."

While at this encampment our monks became acquainted with a Christian woman from Metz, in Lorraine. She had been taken captive by the Tartars in Hungary, and carried into the desert. At first she had suffered great misery; but having married a young Prussian, who was also a prisoner, and who understood the art of building wooden houses (a craft much esteemed by the Tartars), she had become tolerably comfortable, and the mother of three children. The good woman did all in her power for Rubruquis and his companions.

A few weeks before Easter, Manchu-Khan broke up from his encampment, and, crossing the Changai chain of mountains he went on for Kara-Corum or Kara-Kûm, a city on the east side of the river Orchan. He took Rubruquis and his companions with him, and on the way he entreated them to pray to God in their own fashion for milder weather, as it was intensely cold and stormy among the mountains; and many of the mares, ewes, and other animals in his train, were with young, and about to bring forth. On Palm Sunday, at daybreak, they were near Kara-Corum, and the friar says he

blessed the willow boughs he saw on his road, though as yet there were no buds upon them. This Kara-Corum, of which no traces have been found in the desert for some centuries past, is said by Marco Polo, who visited it about eighteen years after Rubruquis, to have been the first city in which these Tartars ever fixed their residence. That brave old Venetian traveller also informs us that it was surrounded by a strong rampart of earth, there being no good supply of stone in those parts; and that outside of the rampart, but near to it, there stood a castle of great size, in which was a handsome palace occupied by the governor of the place. In Rubruquis's time, this palace was occupied by the grand khan himself. Kara-Corum, as well as the city of Oktai-khan, was built by the son and successor of the great conqueror Genghis-Khan, about the year 1235. Oktai-Khan's nephew, Manchu-Khan, was the first of the dynasty that made it his principal residence. Rubruquis says of the city,—“There are two grand streets in it, one of the Saracens, where the fairs are kept, and many merchants resort thither, and one other street of the Cathayans (Chinese), who are all artificers.” It is to be borne in mind that the Tartars had already conquered a great part of northern China, and that the whole of that vast empire fell under Kublai-Khan, Manchu-Khan's immediate successor, in 1280, or about a quarter of a century after this visit of Rubruquis to the Tartar court. Our Franciscan learned several particulars about the Chinese, as that their country was on the Ocean, that their ordinary money was of paper, about the breadth and length of a hand, on which certain lines were written; that they wrote not with a pen but with a

pencil, like that used by European painters, and that in one figure they comprehended many letters forming one word. A Chinese priest clothed in red told him a fabulous story about monkeys, and gave him a marvellous account of a country beyond China, into which if a man entered he ceased from that day to grow old. But Rubruquis, who was never very credulous, tells us broadly that he did not believe the latter story. He says he was inquisitive about the monstrous men of whom Solinus and other old writers had made mention, but as he could never find any one that had seen such men, he much doubts whether they exist. He is almost the only old traveller that does not crowd his pages with monsters, or with tales of pigmies and giants,

“ The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders.”

Rubruquis was a man of rare good sense. Established in the city of Kara-Corum, he to his infinite surprise found a French goldsmith, who had a wife born in Hungary of Mohammedan parents, and by her a son born in Tartary, and well versed in the Tartar language and in French also. The name of this French goldsmith was William Bouchier: he was son of Lawrence Bouchier, and at this time he had a brother called Roger, who “ was yet living upon the great bridge at Paris.” He is frequently mentioned under the name of William of Paris by old travellers and other early writers. He was a very ingenious artisan and cunning workman, a rich man, and in high favour with the khan. He had just finished what he considered his masterpiece. It was a drink-yielding tree, which might have figured in the most dazzling of the

Arabian tales—it was a choice piece of orfevrerie, in some points not unlike the tree in Thalaba.

Rose the gold branches, hung with emerald leaves
Blossom'd with pearls, and rich with ruby fruits.

“In the Khan’s palace,” says Rubruquis, “because it was unseemly to carry about bottles of milk and other drinks there, Master William made him a great silver tree, at the root whereof were four silver lions, having each one pipe, through which flowed pure cow’s milk, and four other pipes were conveyed within the body of the tree unto the top thereof, and the tops spread back again downwards; and upon every one of them was a golden serpent, whose tails twined about the body of the tree. And one of these pipes ran with wine, another with caracosmos, another with ‘ball,’ *i. e.* a drink made of honey, and another with drink made of rice. Between the pipes, at the top of the tree, he made an angel holding a trumpet, and under the tree a hollow vault, wherein a man might be hid; and a pipe ascended from this vault through the tree to the angel. He first made bellows, but they gave not wind enough. Without the palace walls there was a chamber wherein the several drinks were brought; and there were servants there ready to pour them out when they heard the angel sounding his trumpet. And the boughs of the tree were of silver, and the leaves of the fruit. When, therefore, they want drink, the master-butler crieth to the angel that he sound the trumpet. Then he hearing (who is hid in the vault), bloweth the pipe strongly, which goeth to the angel, and the angel sets his trumpet to his mouth, and the trumpet soundeth very shrill. Then the servants hearing which are in the chamber, each of them poureth forth his drink into its proper pipe, and all the pipes pour them forth from above, and they are received below, in vessels prepared for that purpose.”

It so chanced that, when Rubruquis was still at Kara-Corum, Master William the goldsmith fell

sick, and a Nestorian priest gave him so much rhubarb in his holy water that he was brought to death's door. On learning this our good Franciscan went to the Nestorian and entreated him either to proceed "as an apostle doing miracles indeed, by virtue of prayer, or to administer his potion as a physician according to the art of medicine."

The goldsmith's Hungarian wife could also talk French very well. There was, moreover, at Karacorum one Basilicus, the son of an Englishman, who had also been born in Hungary. All these persons seem to have joined in good offices to the travellers, who were now for the first time well lodged and fed. They gave much information respecting the country and people, and the goldsmith's son proved a much better interpreter than the tippling Constantinople drogoman.

On Whit Sunday Rubruquis was called into the presence of Manchu-Khan. Before he went in, the goldsmith's son informed him that it was determined he must return to his own country, and advised him to say nothing against it. When he came before the khan, that mighty monarch of horse-eating men was in a bad humour, for he had been told by some one that the Franciscan had called him a foul infidel. Rubruquis denied this, and then the khan said he thought well he had not said the word. Stretching out a great staff on which he had been leaning towards the monk, he said, "Be not afraid!" Rubruquis smiled and said, "If I had feared I should not have come hither!" After taxing the Christians with not following the doctrines they preached, and making a vague profession of his own faith, which appears to have consisted of theism and a blind belief in sooth-

sayers, he said, "You have a very long way to travel, so make yourself strong with food that you may be able to endure the fatigue." He ordered drink to be given, and having partaken of this our Franciscan departed from the presence and returned not again. A fortnight after the festival of Saint John the friars received a long letter from the khan to King Louis, with a cloak apiece and some other trifling presents for themselves; and were told that they must instantly depart. Father Bartholomew of Cremona, the only Frank of the mission who had accompanied Rubruquis thus far, was so terrified at the prospect of having to recross the deserts by which they had come, that he left him and remained behind with William the Goldsmith until some more convenient opportunity of regaining Christendom should present itself. The khan gave his permission in consideration of Bartholomew's sickness and feebleness, and he even gave the goldsmith some money for the use of this monk. Nothing daunted by this defection, Rubruquis began his journey, accompanied only by his interpreter, one servant, and one Tartar guide. The guide had authority from the khan to take a sheep once in four days, wherever he could find one; but this license was often of no use.

"From Kara-Corum to the court of Baatu," says Father William, "our journey lasted four months and ten days, during all which time we never saw a town, or so much as a single fixed house, except one village in which we did not break bread; nor in all this time did we ever rest from our rough riding, except one day when we could find no horses. . . . Sometimes we had to go two or even three days without any nourishment but cosmos; and at one time we were in great danger of

perishing in the wilderness, for we could not fall in with any people, and our provisions were all consumed, and our horses quite worn out."

In the end of August he met with Sartach, who was travelling to the court of Manchu-Khan, with his wives and children, flocks and herds, leaving, however, many families with their flocks and cattle in the country between the Tanaïs and the Volga. To an application made by the friar for the books, dresses, and other property he had left behind at that chieftain's encampment, Sartach replied that he would find all those things with Baatu his father. He sent Rubruquis a civil message, and two silk pelisses, one for the King of France and the other for himself. It was on the 16th of September, and precisely one year after he had quitted it to go on to Manchu-Khan's court, that our friar again reached the court or encampment of Baatu. Here he was courteously received, and recovered a part but not the whole of his property. Baatu and all his people had long since concluded that the monks must have perished; and some of the Nestorian priests had appropriated their vestments, stoles, psalters, and such like effects. The court of Baatu was then about to move to Sarai, on the eastern bank of the Volga. Rubruquis accompanied it during a whole month; but, tired with the slow and indirect movements of the Tartars, who as usual conducted their flocks and herds with them, he procured a guide, took leave of Baatu, and pushed forward for Sarai, always keeping due south and near to the Volga. He says in his account, "Believing your majesty to be still in Syria, I directed my journey for Persia; but if I had

known you were in France I would have gone through Hungary." He reached Sarai without accident, and left that place on the feast of All Saints (1st of November), still travelling southward. For the first five days after quitting the Volga he did not meet a human being, and for fifteen days he found only one little village or encampment, where one of the sons of Sartach was residing with a goodly company of falconers and falcons. Here they gave him a Tartar guard to protect him from the Lesghis and other fierce and independent Mohammedan tribes. This guard, which consisted of twenty men, was to see him safe beyond the Derbent or iron gate. The day before they reached this gate they came to some vineyards. The monk, for the first time in many months, was enabled to refresh his inward man with some good Christian-like wine. He got safely through the great defiles of Mount Caucasus, and through part of Armenia; but his progress was very slow. He crossed the Araxes on a bridge of boats fastened together with iron chains. At Ayni, then a great Armenian city, containing a hundred Christian churches and two mosques, he met five friars of the Predicant Order, four of whom came from Provence, the fifth from Syria. They had letters from the pope to Sartach, Baatu, and Manchukhan; but when they heard how Rubruquis had been sent back, they directed their journey to Teflis instead of trying to go on to Kara-Corum. At this part of his travels Father William had some fears that his guides would seize him and sell him as a slave to the wandering Kourds. Descending the Euphrates he reached Sebasta or Sivas in the Easter week, and on the following Sunday

he reached Cæsarea of Cappadocia. Hence he proceeded to Konieh or Iconium, where he found many trading Europeans. Traversing the rest of Asia Minor and the passes of Mount Taurus, he reached the Gulf of Scanderoon and embarked for the island of Cyprus, where he arrived eight days before the feast of St. John the Baptist. At this beautiful island, which was entirely under the dominion of the Christians of the West, he found the father provincial of his Order, and learned with much sorrow that King Louis was no longer in the Holy Land. Had Rubruquis known this sooner he would have shaped the latter part of his course very differently, for his great desire was to relate his adventures to the good king in person, and to see Europe and his native country once more. But here he had thrown himself within the direct rule of his superior, who carried him to Antioch, and thence to Tripoli in Syria, where he arrived in the month of August, 1255, just in time to attend a chapter of his Order. He does not tell us, like that corpulent Dutch traveller Van Braam, how many pounds of flesh he had lost upon his journey; but there can be no doubt that his corpulency must have been greatly reduced.

Rubruquis had been altogether about two years and six months on his travels, and he now earnestly besought his superior to allow him to return to Europe and go to King Louis at Paris; but the provincial being a strict disciplinarian, ordered the friar to write to Louis and then retire to the convent of his order at Acre. The monk's address to the devout king is very naïve and curious.

“ To his most sovereign and Christian Lord Louis, by God's grace the renowned King of France, Friar Wil-

liam de Rubruk, the meanest of the Minorites' Order, wisheth health and continual triumph in Christ.

"It is written in the book of Ecclesiasticus concerning the wise man; he shall travel into far countries, and good and evil shall he try in all things. The very same action, my lord and king, have I achieved: howbeit, I wish that I have done it like a wise man, and not like a fool. For many there be that perform the same actions which a wise man doth, not wisely but most indiscreetly, of which number I fear myself to be one. Notwithstanding, however, I have done it because you commanded me, when I departed from your highness, to write all things unto you, which I should see among the Tartars, and you wished also that I should not fear to write long letters. I have now done as your majesty enjoined me, yet with fear and reverence, because I want words and eloquence sufficient to write unto so great a majesty."*

Rubruquis implored the good king to obtain the provincial's permission for his going to France, pledging his word that he would soon again return to his convent in the Holy Land. We have not been able to ascertain whether he obtained the favour, or whether he remained shut up in his cell at Acre. Indeed, after his return to Syria, nothing more seems to be known about him, except that he was living somewhere as late as the year 1293, by which time a greater traveller than he, Marco Polo, was on his way back to Europe, after a very long residence in Tartary, China, and other countries of the remote East.

It is evident that these two early explorers, though they often confirm each other's accounts of the Tartars, knew nothing at all of one another, either personally or by their respective writings.

* Hakluyt.

Before the invention of printing, and the diffusion of a love for reading among the people, literary fame travelled very slowly. Even in France Rubruquis himself was hardly known until many generations after his death. His Letter or Book—for a book it is, though not a large one—containing the account of his travels, was written in the monkish Latin of the time. He has been much indebted to Englishmen. That marvellous man Roger Bacon, who was a contemporary and a monk of his own order, made honourable mention of Rubruquis, and gave a spirited abstract of his travels, in one of his numerous works, in Latin. It was also an Englishman that first gave his travels a modern and popular dress. This was old Richard Hakluyt, who introduced a translation of the greater part of the book in his *Collection of Voyages and Travels*, published about the year 1600. After Hakluyt, Purchas, in his ‘*Pilgrimes*,’ gave the whole book or Letter from a copy he found in “Benet Colledge Library in Cambridge,” with his usual felicitous quaintness. Purchas’s folio, which contains it, was published in 1625. Four years after its appearance Father Bergeron translated it from Purchas’s English into French, being aided, he says, by two old manuscript copies of the work in Latin. Since that time Rubruquis has obtained reputation and the place he merits in the history of travellers, some account of his journey being included in most collections of voyages and Travels.* He was, as we have said, a man of

* The Geographical Society of Paris, who have many claims upon the gratitude of the reading European society at large, have recently published a new edition of the Travels of Rubruquis, from a MS. in the British Museum, col-

rare good sense. The sobriety of his descriptions is quite marvellous for the time in which he wrote. In concluding his Letter or Book he modestly says to King Louis,

“ I have thus written to your highness according to my weak power and understanding, craving pardon from your clemency for my deficiencies, or for anything that may be indiscreetly or foolishly written, as from a man of little understanding, not accustomed to write long histories.”

But, although there are deficiencies, arising out of the state of science at that time, there is nothing indiscreet or foolish in his simple narration. His pictures of manners and customs are exceedingly good, concise, and truthful ; but it is to be regretted that, on other points, from want of geographical science, from vagueness of language, and in part probably from the gross mistakes of the earlier copyists of his MS., we can seldom trace his course with any precision. When he launches into the deserts there are no permanent cities or towns to guide us. Even Kara-Corum has disappeared, and doubts are entertained as to the spot whereon it stood. If we rightly understand his text, it was at the distance of only eleven or twelve days' journey from Cathay or China.

Rubruquis, however, had the merit of being the first European traveller that gave a correct account of the Caspian. That *inland* and *separate* sea was correctly described as such by some of the ancient

lated with other MSS at Cambridge and Leyden. The version of our good old Purchas may, however, still be considered as excellent. His style is deliciously quaint, and the Parisian collators have not in this instance found out any variations of text that are to be considered very important.

Greeks;—thus Herodotus and (long after him) Aristotle considered it as an inland sea, or vast isolated lake; but, after Aristotle's time, Eratosthenes and Strabo regarded the Caspian as a great gulf or inlet of the Northern Ocean, and, from their time, a notion generally prevailed that it was connected with the Northern Ocean. Rubruquis ascertained that it was everywhere surrounded by land, that many rivers fell into it, and that it had no connexion with the Ocean or with any other sea. Yet, so little was the account of his journey known or read, that the old error was repeated, in maps and books of geography, long after the time of our traveller.

Like Marco Polo, this truth-loving monk rarely, if ever, tells an incredible story without informing us that he gives it merely upon hearsay. He is himself no seer of monsters, whether fiends, giants, or pigmies. He appears to have been deluded by a Chinese priest he met at the court of the Grand Khan. Yet perhaps this was only a misapprehension arising from the ignorance and carelessness of his interpreters, of whom he so frequently complains. Being struck with the bright red of this Chinese priest's dress, he inquired how and where the colour was procured. The priest told him that on certain high craggy rocks in the east of Cathay there dwelt certain creatures like men, not above a cubit high and all hairy, who leap rather than walk, and dwell in inaccessible caves; that those who go to hunt them carry some spirituous liquor, which they leave in holes in the rocks, and then hide themselves; that the little fellows come out from their holes, and having tasted the liquor, cry out *Chin, Chin*, on which

multitudes gather together and drink till they are drunk, and fall asleep; that then the hunters come and bind them, after which they draw a few drops of blood from the veins of their necks, and let them go free; and that this blood of the little people is the brightest and most precious dye. This would not be a bad description of a method of catching monkeys or apes; and we have seen something very like it practised by the English soldiers on the rock of Gibraltar and by the Spaniards at Centa or Ape's hill (Mons Abyla) on the African side of the strait. But Rubruquis appears to have thought that the Cathayan priest meant to speak of pigmies and little men, and not of monkeys or apes; and we know that the blood neither of man nor of monkey gives any such lasting rich dye. Yet that ingenious and shrewd investigator of nature, our own Friar Bacon, who, instead of being a magician, was a philosopher of great industry and genius, and who was contemporary with Rubruquis and of the same Order, translated and inserted, in his geographical account of the world, the description of pigmies as given to our traveller by the red-clad priest of Cathay; and this Roger Bacon apparently does without any doubt as to the authenticity of the story. But the minutest account of these monkey-men was afterwards given by that very hyperbolical Knight of St. Albans, Sir John Mandeville. This Chinese priest, moreover, told Rubruquis that there was a country beyond Cathay, into which, if a man entered, he always continued of the same age at which he entered it. "But this," saith Friar William, "I do not believe." It has been conjectured that here the Cathayan priest merely gave an enigmatical

representation of the province of Death, or of the tombs.* But there appears always to have been prevalent a notion that there was, somewhere, a happy land, wherein man might not only enjoy his thousand long years, but live on for ever without being liable to any of the decays and infirmities of old age. Neither the Greeks nor the Romans entertained any doubt touching the existence of the Hyperboreans, those happy people that dwelt in the calm regions beyond the wind Boreas, ignorant of the cutting blasts of the north, as of mortal toil and strife, and living on in perpetual youth. This was only a natural aspiration of man at the time when no religion had opened to him a sure prospect of immortality.

Rubruquis was also told that in Great Cathay or China there was a town having walls of silver and towers of gold. Of such of the Chinese as he saw himself he gives a very faithful description. He praises their mechanical skill and excellence in all kinds of handicraft, and commends their physicians for their exact judging of diseases by the pulse. He says that their children are always brought up to the same employment as their fathers. He correctly describes their printed or written characters, and their manner of writing or rather of painting their characters with small brushes or hair-pencils. He also mentions the paper currency of China, in the existence of which the Europeans had at that time a great difficulty to believe. Since our own great use of bank-notes, the mind has become sufficiently familiarized with such a currency.

A modern writer speaks of the Travels of Ru-

* Robert Kerr, F.R.S., General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels.

bruquis and Carpini in a tone which we can sincerely echo:—

“These works, although tinged with the modes of thinking of the age, and especially of the profession of those who wrote them, are precious objects to us for the interesting details they give of a distant country, at that time scarcely known by name.”*

While Rubruquis was in Tartary there was a royal and Christian traveller in those parts, whose history is sufficiently romantic. This was Prince Hatto, or Haitho, eldest son of Leon II., king of Armenia Minor, who had been reduced by the conquering Tartars to the condition of a tributary. In the hope of obtaining from Manchu-Khan some abatement of the heavy tribute, Hatto travelled to the court of Kara-Corum. He was going eastward while Rubruquis was returning towards the west; and the monk and the prince were very near meeting upon the road. While Hatto was at the encampment of Sartach, he behaved with Christian charity and generosity to the two attendants of Rubruquis who were detained there, and who, but for the royal Armenian traveller, would have perished of hunger, or been reduced to a state of slavery. Prince Hatto, who was accompanied by his wife and child, reached the court of Manchu-Khan in safety, and there, as it appears, he succeeded in the object of his mission. On the death of the king his father Hatto resigned his claim to the Armenian crown in favour of his brother Theodore; but for a long series of years he assisted his

* T. Johnes, Preliminary Discourse to the Travels of Bertrandon de la Brocquiere. Printed at the Hafod Press, A.D. 1807.

brother and his brother's son and successor in the field and in the cabinet. In his old age he quitted his unhappy country and went to Cyprus, where he became a monk. This is said to have been in the year 1305, and it was probably some years earlier. The descendants of Guy of Lusignan, the expelled Christian king of Jerusalem, still ruled over that beautiful island, which was at this time in a happy and flourishing condition. But the royal traveller did not tarry long there. Crossing the Mediterranean he went to France, and settled himself at a religious house in Poictou. Here he dictated to Nicholas Saleoni a compendious history of the events which had occurred in the East from the commencement of the conquest of the Tartars or Mongols, including the reigns of Genghis Khan and his successors to Manchu-Khan inclusively; and a narrative of the wars and sufferings of his own country. This account Saleoni translated into Latin in the year 1307, by order of the reigning Pope Clement V. This account contains a good many of the fruits of Hatto's travels in Tartary, and towards China, and for the time good geographical notices of other countries in the East; but it contains no adventures or romantic incidents. It should appear that Hatto was kindly treated by Philip IV., and that he died in France at an extreme old age.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER the return of Father Rubruquis many missionaries were sent into the East. Until the foundation of the Order of Jesus by Loyola, in the year 1540, these missionaries were almost entirely Franciscans, or Dominicans. Many of them penetrated into India, and some appear to have reached China. Tartary also was traversed by these courageous pilgrims ; but the dread of a Tartar invasion had subsided in Europe, and, generally, little notice was taken of any of these missions. To get even a defective list of them recourse must be had to the voluminous histories of the monkish orders, the writers of which rarely say more than that such a number of pious brethren of the community went to win the crown of martyrdom among the pagans and idolaters of the East. Many of them no doubt perished without remitting any record of their doings. Few or no accounts of their travels were written, or if they were written they have not been preserved.

In the same ages, or during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a good many traders or other adventurous laymen seem to have found their way to India, the great islands of the Indian ocean, and even to Japan and China. These men seem generally to have started from Alexandria, with which a constant intercourse was kept up by Venice, Genoa, and other Italian States, for the sake of purchasing the productions of the Orient ; or from

the ports on the Red Sea, where the productions of the East were landed by the Arabian navigators. It was impossible to visit either Alexandria or the head of the Red Sea without hearing magnificent accounts of the rich countries which ever since the time of Alexander the Great had annually filled this mart or entrepôt with its productions; and thirst for gain, curiosity, and the love of adventure impelled the young European to venture among unbelieving Arabs, and trust his life on board their ships. Moreover, for any mechanical skill which some of these adventurers might possess, the countries of the East offered a good market. With the distinguished exception, however, of Marco Polo the Venetian, no more is known of the voyages and travels of these adventurers than of those of the monkish missionaries their contemporaries. We can only deduce from the frequent mention made by Marco of European Christians settled in the countries beyond the Indian ocean, that the collective numbers of these adventurers must have been considerable.

Marco Polo, incomparably the greatest traveller of the middle ages, and who has been called the Herodotus of those times, was descended from a noble family of Venice, which came originally from Dalmatia, on the opposite side of the Adriatic Sea. In Venice, commerce was not considered incompatible with nobility of birth or antiquity of descent. There, as at Genoa, the proud rival of Venice, the proudest and highest of the aristocracy devoted themselves to commercial pursuits; and Nicolo Polo and Maffeo Polo, the father and the uncle of Marco, were merchants, who, in partnership, traded chiefly with the East, the valuable pro-

ductions of which were supplied by the Italian republics alone to the rest of Europe. They supplied themselves either at Alexandria, which received the imports by the Red Sea, or at Constantinople or Trebizond, which received the goods that came by the way of the Persian Gulf. Nicolo and Maffeo appear to have dealt largely in jewellery and precious stones.

It is not known in what year Marco Polo was born; but it should appear from some other dates given in connection with his history, that he must have come into this world, of which he was destined to see so much, in 1254 or 1255. The circumstances attending his birth and youth are interesting and melancholy. Tempted by the prospect of some brilliant speculations in that great mart, his father and his uncle both set out from Venice to Constantinople. His father was a traveller when young Marco was born; and neither he nor his brother returned to their native country until Marco was almost a man. Nor was the absence of a father's care supplied by a mother's tenderness;—his mother died shortly after giving him birth, so that he grew up without having known either of his parents.

On their arrival at Constantinople, Nicolo Polo and his brother disposed of the Italian merchandise they had carried thither; and they then looked about them, to find how they could best employ the capital they had realised by the sale of their goods. While thus engaged they learned that a new, a distant, but a promising market for costly articles which could be easily carried, had arisen on the banks of the Volga, among the Western Tartars, who, after doing incalculable mischief to

many provinces of Asia, seemed to have quietly settled down near that great river. The two enterprising brothers converted their money into jewels that were in request among those Tartars, and in the year 1255 they departed by sea from Constantinople, crossed the stormy Euxine, and landed on the Crimea. Proceeding thence, sometimes by land, and at others by water, they at last reached the court or camp of the Tartar Khan Barkah, one of the grandsons of Zinghis Khan. This prince not only treated them with justice, but with munificence and high consideration. The two Poli stayed two months with him, and learned his language. At the end of this period they would have returned homewards with the double profits they had made, but, just at the moment fixed for their departure, hostilities broke out between their protectors and another nation or horde of Tartars, and cut off their road to Constantinople. Upon this disappointment, it was recommended to them, as the only practicable mode of reaching Constantinople, to proceed in an easterly direction, by an unfrequented route, so as to skirt the limits of Barkah's territories.

"Accordingly they made their way to a town named Okak, situated on the confines of the kingdom of the Western Tartars. Leaving that place and advancing still further, they crossed one of the four great rivers of Paradise and came to a desert, the extent of which was seventeen days' journey, wherein they found neither town, castle, nor any substantial building, but only Tartars with their herds dwelling in tents on the plain. Having passed this tract, they arrived at length at a well-built city called Bokhara, in a province of that name, belonging to the dominions of Persia, but governed by a prince whose name was Barak."

This passage, like so many others, is not very clear. The necessary geographical explanations are, that the travellers went by the northern side of the Caspian, that they crossed the great river Sihun or Sirr, as well as some other rivers which flow into the Caspian; and that they approached the city of Bokhara by the desert of Karak. This was a very circuitous route to get to Constantinople! The two brothers, however, performed the journey with perfect safety, and then took up their quarters in Bokhara, which was then a very trading and thriving city, being one of the greatest seats of the commerce of Central Asia, and annually visited by immense caravans from India, Afghanistan, Persia, and other countries. From everything that is related of it by the early travellers, it should appear that Bokhara was far from being sunk in the barbarism and bigotry in which it now is. While our Venetians were living there in credit and comfort, a Tartar ambassador, described as "a person of consequence and gifted with eminent talents," on his way to Kublai Khan, the great conqueror, who had completed the reduction of the northern provinces of China, and had added to his dominion some of the southern provinces of that immense empire, arrived at Bokhara, and during his residence there made the acquaintance of our travellers, who had now become proficient in the Tartar language. He was delighted with their conversation, wit, and intelligence; and after associating with them for many days, and finding their manners agreeable to him, he proposed that they should accompany him to the presence of the great Kublai Khan, who would be pleased by their appearance at his court, which had not hitherto

been visited by any person from their country. The ambassador assured them that they would be honourably received by the emperor, and recompensed with many gifts. The prospect was tempting; Nicolo and Maffeo had the curiosity and spirit of true travellers; their endeavours to return homeward would at that time have exposed them to imminent risks; and so they accepted the offer, and recommending themselves to the protection of Heaven, they set out on their journey eastward in the suite of the Tartar ambassador, being attended by several Christian servants whom they had brought with them from Venice. The course they took at first was between the north-east and north. Their journey was slow, and in many places laborious and dangerous. They were frequently delayed for long periods by the deep snows and the swelling of the rivers, being obliged to halt until the snow had melted and the floods subsided. It took them a whole year to get from Bokhara to the imperial residence.

Being introduced to the presence of the Grand Khan, the travellers were received with the condescension and affability that belonged to his character; and as they were the first *Italians* who had made their appearance in that country, they were entertained with feasts and honoured with other marks of distinction. Kublai, for his race and age, was a very enlightened, liberal, and beneficent sovereign. He entered graciously into conversation with the two Venetians, making many sensible inquiries about the western parts of the world, the relative importance of Christian princes, the extent of their possessions, the manner in which justice was administered in their several kingdoms.

and principalities, and their system and conduct of warfare. As their familiarity at court increased, in the course of long conversations, they gave the Khan ample and accurate information, and more particularly concerning the Pope, whose influence in propelling the nations of Europe upon Asia in the Crusades had rendered him important in the eyes of Kublai Khan. Their acquaintance with the Mongol language was by this time very perfect. So satisfied was the Tartar conqueror with all they told him, and so convinced was he of their integrity, from the experience he had had of them in private dealings and matters of commerce, that he resolved they should make the best of their way back to Italy, and, accompanied by an officer of his court, repair to Rome, as his ambassadors to the Pope. His object, he told them, was to request his holiness to send to him a hundred men of learning, thoroughly acquainted with the principles of the Christian faith as well as with the seven sciences, and qualified to prove to the learned of his own dominions, by just and fair argument, that the Christian faith is superior to, and founded upon more evident truth than any other; that the gods of the Tartars and idols worshipped in their houses were no better than evil spirits; and that they and the rest of the people in the East were under an error in worshipping them. The travellers humbly prostrated themselves before the Khan, declaring their willingness and instant readiness to perform, to the utmost of their ability, whatever might be his royal will. Upon which he caused letters to be written in his name to the Pope of Rome, and these he delivered into their hands. He likewise

gave orders that they should be furnished with a pass or golden tablet displaying the imperial cipher, according to the usage established by his majesty ; in virtue of which the person bearing it, together with his whole suite, are safely conveyed and escorted from station to station by the governors of all places within the imperial dominions, and are entitled, during the time of their residing in any city, castle, town, or village, to a supply of provisions and everything necessary for their accommodation. In the vulgar European dialect of Canton, this is termed the Emperor's grand *Chop*, a word used to express seal, mark, warrant, licence, or passport.* Passports existed in China many centuries before they were adopted in Europe. It must be confessed, that a Chinese passport is a much better thing for the bearer than a European one, as it ensures him gratuitous accommodation, and generally food on the road.

After a long stay, at the imperial residence, during which the Venetians seem to have traded extensively and very profitably, they had their audience of leave of Kublai Khan, and set out to retrace their steps to Europe. Unfortunately the Tartar noble, who was to accompany them to the pope, sunk under ill-health and the fatigues of the journey before they had travelled more than twenty days, and being dangerously ill, it was determined upon consulting all who were present, and with the approbation of the nobleman himself, that he should be left behind. But under favour of the imperial tablet or passport the Venetians and their somewhat numerous suite travelled onwards towards

* Marsden, Notes on the Travels of Marco Polo.

the regions of the West and the shores of the Mediterranean sea. So far as the Mongol dominion extended, the tablet procured them hospitality and attention, in whatsoever place they passed through, their expenses were defrayed, and suitable escorts were furnished to them. But notwithstanding these advantages, so great and numerous were the natural difficulties they had to encounter, from the extreme cold, the snow, the ice, and the flooding of the rivers, that their progress was excessively tedious, and three years elapsed before they were enabled to reach a Mediterranean seaport town in the Lesser Armenia, named Giazza.* It may be reasonably surmised that they trafficked on the way, and that they spent a considerable time in such cities as were the seat of any considerable trade, or were resorted to by the great caravans. We have ourselves known an Armenian trader of Constantinople spend twelve months on a journey from that capital to the city of Bokhara, and about an equal time in returning thence; but wherever there was a market or a fair this man tarried and traded. The port called by the travellers Giazza is supposed to be a place on the northern side of the Gulf of Scandaroon, now variously called Lajazzo, Aiazza, or Layassa. At the time of the Crusades and later, there was a frequent communication between it and Cyprus and Palestine. Departing thence by sea, they arrived at the celebrated city of Acre, (which had remained in the hands of the Christians ever since its recapture by Richard I. of England in 1191,) some time in the month of April 1269, and there learned with much

* Marsden's amended translation.

concern, that the pope to whom they were deputed by Kublai Khan was recently dead. A legate whom the late pope had appointed, named Messer Tebaldo de' Visconti di Piacenza, was at this time resident in Acre, where he exercised great authority over the crusaders; and to this legate the travellers gave an account of what they had in command from the Grand Khan. Messer Tebaldo advised them by all means to wait the election of another pope, when they might present themselves as Kublai's ambassadors. Approving of this counsel, and being naturally anxious to revisit their country and home after so many years' absence, the two Poli embarked in a ship bound for the Eubœa (now Negropont) and Venice. On their arrival at Venice, Nicolo Polo found that his wife, whom he had left with child at his departure, was dead; after having given birth to a son, who had received the name of Marco, and who had now nearly attained to the age of nineteen. The father had the satisfaction to find that young Marco had been carefully brought up and instructed, and that he was a youth of spirit and intelligence, fit to be a traveller like himself and brother. We are not informed what honours the doge and citizens of Venice paid to their illustrious countrymen on their return from the remote East; but we are at liberty to conjecture that as the Poli brought back with them stores of money as well as stores of knowledge, they were honourably received in their native city.

The sacred college, or body corporate of cardinals, was distracted by inveterate factions who could not agree in the election of a new pope. This was not unfrequently the case during the

middle ages, and was not one of the least of the causes which led to the wars and anarchy of those periods. Two years did the Poli remain in Venice, continually expecting the election. At length becoming apprehensive that the Grand Khan might be displeased at their delay, or might suppose it was not their intention to revisit his country, they judged it expedient to return to Acre, where the legate Tebaldo might, to a certain extent, assume the functions of a pope, and do at least part of that which Kublai Khan wanted to be done for the benefit of his people. Accordingly they left Venice, accompanied by young Marco, whose youthful imagination was inflamed by the recital of their travellings and adventures, and who was eager to tread in their footsteps. They arrived safely at the great seaport of the Crusaders; and thence, under the sanction of the legate, they made a visit to Jerusalem, and there provided themselves with some of the oil belonging to the lamp of the Holy Sepulchre. On their return to Acre, Messer Tebaldo listened favourably to the suggestions of the Poli; he furnished them with his letters addressed to Kublai Khan, bearing testimony to the fidelity with which they had endeavoured to execute the commission with which they had been charged at the imperial residence, and explaining to him the vacancy in the papal see, which prevented more being done at present; and so giving the travellers his blessing, they took their departure by sea and proceeded to the before-mentioned port of Giazza. But scarcely had the Poli taken their departure from Acre, when the legate Tebaldo received envoys from Italy, despatched by the College of Cardinals, to announce that a pope had at last

been elected, and that that pope was Messer Tebaldo himself. The legate thereupon assumed the name of Gregory the Tenth. His election had taken place on the 1st of September, 1271. Considering that he was now in a situation that enabled him more fully to satisfy the wishes of the Tartar sovereign, he hastily transmitted letters to the King of Lesser Armenia, communicating to him the event of his election, and requesting, in case the Poli should not have already passed through his dominions, that he would give directions for their immediate return to Acre. These letters of the pope found the travellers still in Lesser Armenia. With great alacrity they obeyed the summons to return, and having been furnished by the King of Armenia with a galley, they went again from the gulf of Scandaroon to the coast of Syria.

Upon their arrival at Acre, their old friend Messer Tebaldo received them as sovereign pontiff, but at the same time with much kindness and condescension. His holiness forthwith drew up letters papal, and appointed two friars, who happened to be on the spot, to accompany them to China, as persons well fitted to carry on the work of conversion. One of these monks was named Fra Nico o da Vicenza, the other, Fra Guglielmo da Tripoli; they were both of the order of preachers or Dominicans, and were both reputed men of letters and of science, as well as profound theologians. To them the pope gave licence and authority to ordain priests, to consecrate bishops, &c. He also gave in charge to the Poli various valuable presents, and among these divers very handsome crystal vases to be delivered to the Grand Khan in his name, together with his holy bene-

diction. As Gregory had not yet taken possession of his see, as the papal court was much embarrassed by debt, as he himself was poor, and as little could be spared from Acre, which the Mussulmans were again threatening with siege, Gregory could not at this moment send richer presents or a more ample mission.

The Poli started again from Acre towards the close of the year 1271 or early in 1272. The zeal and courage of the two friars appointed to accompany them were not equal to their learning and theology, and were far inferior to the heart and courage of the lay merchants; for on finding that the Sultan of Babylon, or rather the Mameluke Sultan of Egypt, the terrible Bibars, surnamed Bundokdari, who had made himself master of Antioch, had slain or made captives of all its Christian inhabitants, and had demolished its churches, the most magnificent and celebrated in the East, was invading the Armenian territory with a numerous army, and was overrunning and laying waste that Christian country, the two friars trembled for their lives, and determined not to proceed further with the fearless and, in their eyes, rash Venetians. Accordingly they delivered over to the Poli the letters and presents intrusted to them by the Pope, and placing themselves under the direction of the master of the Knights Templars who had been stationed in this part of Armenia for its defence, they with him returned directly to the coast. It was not often that these monkish missionaries of the early times behaved in so spiritless a manner. Nothing daunted by their desertion nor by the rumours that reached them of the terrible doings of the Mameluke Sultan, the

three Poli traversed Armenia and struck boldly into the interior of Asia. Old Nicolo and Maffeo had long been inured to hardships, difficulties, and perils, and young Marco, the true son of his father, was supported by the buoyancy of youth. They followed a north-easterly course, availing themselves of the protection and convenience of caravans as they occurred, and seem to have gone through the greater Armenia, Persian Irak, Khorassan, and by the trading city of Balkh, into the country of Badakhshan, where, near to the sources of the river Oxus, they tarried a whole year. This long stay may have arisen from their being obliged to wait for the formation of a powerful caravan wherewith to cross the dangerous chain of mountains—the Belut-tag and Muz-tag,—or from a severe illness young Marco suffered at this place, or, still more probably, from the union of these two impediments. Their time, however, was not unprofitably spent. They appear to have prosecuted their profession as merchants, and they collected information from the people of the country, and the travellers that collected in the caravan-serais. Although they did not visit those regions, they obtained from native travellers a knowledge of Kashmir, and other countries on the confines of India : Kashmir, called by him Kesnur, is, according to Marco, a flowery delightful land, with a sweet, temperate climate, never too warm or too cold : the natives are of a dark complexion, but by no means black, and the women are very comely :

Who has not heard of the vale of Cashmere,
With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave ;
Its temples, and grottos, and fountains as clear
As the love-lighted eyes that hang over their wave ?

Their food is flesh, with rice and other grains; yet they are in general of a spare habit. Besides the capital city there are many other towns and strong places. There are also woods, desert tracks, and difficult passes in the surrounding mountains, which give great security to the inhabitants against foreign invasion. The inhabitants have a language peculiar to themselves. From this country there is a communication by water with the Indian Sea. The article of coral carried thither from Europe is sold at a higher price than in any other part of the world. All this, which was told for the first time in Europe by our illustrious Venetian, is perfectly correct, and has been proved so by all the travellers who have visited the delightful valley of Kashmir since his time. The beauty of the women of Kashmir, their gaiety and love of pleasure, are celebrated throughout India, and have awakened the transports of more than one European poet.

The valley is nearly surrounded by lofty mountains, being embosomed within the Hindu Cosh or Indian Caucasus. "The fortifications with which nature has furnished it," says an eastern writer of the sixteenth century, "are of an astonishing height."* The delightful territory is therefore very difficult of access; but yet, from the unwarlike character of the natives, it has been exposed to frequent invasions and conquests. Most of the trade of the country is carried on by water, and there is a communication with the Indian Ocean. The climate of the country is indeed delightful, and has always been a subject of panegyric. "The whole of this land," says an eastern writer,

* Abu'lfaiz, as quoted by Mr. Marsden.

without any hyperbole, "is like a garden in perpetual spring." On account of the temperateness of the climate, Kashmir was for a long time the summer residence of the Mogul emperors of Hindustan. The river Jnilum, or Behut, which flows through the vale of Kashmir, and is there navigable, falls into the Indus, not far from the city of Multan; but as its course, after leaving that valley, is through a mountainous country, and as the navigation of the Indus is frequently interrupted, the water communication with the ocean can hardly be called direct. It is perfectly true that the people of Kashmir, though professing the Hindu religion, eat meat of every kind except beef.

Marco Polo further says that the people of Kashmir have amongst them a particular class of devotees, who live in communities, observe strict abstinence in regard to eating, drinking, and the intercourse of the sexes, refraining from every kind of sensual indulgence; that these holy persons generally live to a considerable age; that they have several large houses like Christian monasteries, in which certain superiors exercise the functions of our abbots, and that they are all held in great reverence by the mass of the people. These communities have been swept away by the jealousy of the Hindu Brahmins, the fierce intolerance of some of the Mohammedans, and the utter barbarism of the Afghan conquerors, yet they existed in Kashmir as late as the sixteenth century, when the eastern writer, from whom we have just quoted, gives the following description of them :—

"The third time that the author followed the imperial stirrup to the delightful territory of Kashmir, he

met with some old men of this religion, who are doubtless true worshippers of God. They revile not any other sect, and ask nothing of any one; they plant the roads with fruit-trees to furnish the traveller with refreshment; they abstain from flesh; and have no intercourse with the other sex. There are now near two thousand of this sect in Kashmir."*

These eastern monks were evidently Buddhists, and appear to have resembled the Talapoins of Ava and Siam, and the Gylongs of Thibet, who still in those countries reside in communities, under the discipline of a superior.

As is usual with him, when he trusts to hearsay reports, Marco gives a few marvellous stories about the people of Kashmir, who were to him unknown. He says they are adepts beyond all others in the art of magic, insomuch that they can make their deaf and dumb idols to speak, can obscure the day, and perform many other miracles; that they are pre-eminent among the idolatrous nations, and that from them proceed the idols which are worshipped in other parts. We may doubt the extent of their powers, yet we learn from other sources of a more recent date, that the people of Kashmir were great manufacturers of idols, and marvellous astrologers and soothsayers. Thus, even where the old Venetian merely repeats what he has been told, there is generally some foundation of truth in what he says.

When they left the country of Badakhshan and the sources of the Oxus, they proceeded through the great valley then called Vokhan or Wukhan, which is a part of the territory now held by the Afghans. After this valley their road ascended

to the lofty and wild regions of Pamer and Belôr, which are still imperfectly known to geographers, and which Marco describes as being so high that no birds are found on them, and fire burns dully near the summits. A sign of a human habitation or a blade of grass was not seen for many days; and the district of Belôr, moreover, was infested by a tribe of cruel savages, clad in the skins of wild beasts. In Pamer he describes a remarkable breed of goats with enormously large horns. All this agrees with Mr. Mountstuart Elphinstone's descriptions in his account of Caubul, and with the other modern travellers who have examined parts of this country and its productions. After fifty-two days' hard travelling in these inhospitable regions, where the snow is almost everywhere perpetual, the Poli arrived safely at the vast city of Kashgar, a place of great trade and resort for caravans; which had been till lately the capital of an independent state, but was now included in the spreading dominions of Kublai Khan. Kashgar is situated in that part of Turkistan which Europeans call the lesser Bucharia. It is situated on a well-cultivated plain, near a fine though not navigable river. Marco's description of the place, which still is, as it then was, an emporium for the trade between Tartary, India, and China, will give the reader a good notion of the concise, pithy style in which the old traveller describes what he had seen.

"Its inhabitants are of the Mohammedan religion. The province is extensive, and contains many towns and castles, of which Kashgar is the largest and most important. The language of the people is peculiar to themselves. They subsist by commerce and manufacture, particularly works of cotton. They have handsome

gardens, orchards, and vineyards. Abundance of cotton is produced here, as well as flax and hemp. Merchants from this country travel to all parts of the world ; but in truth they are a covetous, sordid race, eating badly and drinking worse. Besides the Mohammedans there are amongst the inhabitants several Nestorian Christians, who are permitted to live under their own laws, and to have their churches. The extent of the province is five days' journey.*

This again is a true picture: the people of Bucharia, in Central Asia, are still famed for their commercial habits and parsimony.

The still more celebrated city of Samarcand lay far to the west of their present route ; but Marco, who is believed to have visited that place at a later period, when engaged in the service of Kublai Khan, mentions it incidentally here, as being a noble city,* adorned with beautiful gardens, and surrounded by a plain, in which are produced all the fruits that man can desire. In connection with Samarcand is introduced a miraculous episode, which, in all probability, was never written or dictated by Marco. As it has not even the merit of being a good romantic story, we forbear any further allusion to it.

On quitting Kashgar the travellers went through the Alpine regions of Yerken or Yarkund, where Marco observed that the inhabitants were afflicted with elephantiasis, or the permanent œdematous swelling of the leg to a monstrous size, and with goîtres or huge swellings in their necks. He describes the inhabitants of all these regions as having everything necessary for human life in the greatest plenty, and as being much addicted to trade and

* Marsden's improved translation.

manufactures, but not good soldiers. They *cultivated extensively*, not only grain and cotton, but also flax and hemp. Their gardens and vineyards were very numerous and well kept. The description is true at the present day.

The travellers passed through a province which they call Peyn. Here, too, much cotton is produced, and the inhabitants live by manufacturing and trade.

“But,” says Marco with becoming indignation, “they have this brutal custom,—if a married man goes to a distance from home, and is absent twenty days, his wife, if inclined so to do, has a right to take to herself another husband; and the men, on the same principle, may take a new wife wherever they happen to reside.”

Next they arrived at Khoten, another city of great celebrity and commerce, near which were found very valuable chalcedonies, jaspers, and other precious stones. Marco laments that these parts of Turkistan were liable to the irruptions of marauding Tartars.

“When an army of Tartars passes through, if they are enemies, the inhabitants are plundered of their goods, and if friends, their cattle are killed and devoured. For this reason, when the people are aware that an army is coming, they fly with their families and cattle into the Sandy Desert, to the distance of two days’ journey, seeking some spot where they may find fresh water. From the same fears, when they gather in their harvest, they deposit the grain in caverns amongst the sands; taking monthly from the store so much as may be wanted for their own consumption: nor can any strangers know the places to which they resort for this purpose, because the tracks of their feet in the light sands are presently effaced by the wind.”

In five more days our Venetians arrived at the city of Lop, near to which the Jesuits have placed a lake, which does not appear to exist. Though now far within the dominions of the great Kublai Khan, they were still far from having surmounted all their difficulties and dangers. They had yet to toil across the great desert of Kobi, called by the Mongol Tartars the 'Hungry Desert,' and by the Chinese "the Sea of Sand," which begins a little beyond Lop. The horrid nature of this hungry desert, and the difficulties of crossing it, have been sufficiently confirmed by more recent travellers, and particularly by the honest and accurate John Bell of Antermony, who, in 1720, traversed another part of it in the suite of a Russian ambassador, sent by Peter the Great to China. But Marco wrote in a superstitious age, and, taking with too much faith the marvellous relations of the ignorant Tartars, he crowded the desert with all sorts of imaginary horrors, some of which may be reduced to the natural phenomena of the *mirage*; whilst others, such as the malignant spirits that decoyed the travellers from their path and left them to perish of hunger in untrodden solitudes, and that filled the air "with the sounds of all kinds of musical instruments, and also of drums and the clash of arms," may be safely assigned to the effects of the winds and to fancy.

"It is asserted as a well-known fact," says Marco, "that this desert is the abode of many evil spirits, which amuse travellers to their destruction with most extraordinary delusions. If, during the day-time, any persons remain behind on the road, either when overtaken by sleep, or otherwise, until the caravan has passed a hill, and is no longer in sight, they unexpectedly hear

themselves called by their names, and in a tone of voice to which they are accustomed.* Supposing the call to proceed from their companions, they are led away by it from the direct road, and not knowing in what direction to go, are left to perish. In the night-time they are persuaded they hear the march of a large cavalcade, and concluding the noise to be that of the footsteps of their own party, they direct theirs to the quarter from whence it seems to proceed ; but upon the breaking of day, they find they have been misled, and drawn into some perilous situation. Sometimes likewise during the day these spirits assume the appearance of their travelling companions, who address them by name, and endeavour to conduct them out of the proper road. It is said, also, that some persons, in their course across the desert, have seen what appeared to them to be a body of armed men advancing towards them, and apprehensive of being attacked and plundered, have taken to flight. Losing by this means the right path, and ignorant of the direction they should take to regain it, they have perished miserably of hunger. Marvellous indeed, and almost passing belief, are the stories related of these spirits of the desert, which are said at times to fill the air with the sounds of all kinds of musical instruments, and also of drums and the clash of arms ; obliging the travellers to close their line of march, and to proceed in more compact order. They find it necessary also to take the precaution, before they repose for the night, to fix an advanced signal, pointing out the course they are afterwards to hold ; as well as to attach a bell to each of the beasts of burthen, for the purpose of their being more easily kept from straggling. Such are the excessive troubles and dangers that must unavoidably be encountered in the passage of this desert."†

It is, however, to be noticed that Marco Polo repeats all these marvellous things merely upon

* "The airy tongues which syllable men's names."

† Mr. Marsden's improved translation.

hearsay. He does not tell us that he heard any of these aerial voices or saw any of these spectral figures. He merely gives us to understand that he crossed the desert in thirty days, and that in this track neither beasts nor birds were met with, there being no kind of food for them. He mentions the scarcity of water and the springs occasionally found, where the water was salt and bitter. He does not forget to make proper mention of the services of the camel in deserts like these. Beyond the desert the travellers came to Scha-cheu, or the City of the Sands, where they found among the idolatrous population a few Nestorian Christians and Mohammedans,—one of the many curious proofs afforded by Marco that both these religions had penetrated into the most remote regions of the earth, where Europeans but little thought they existed. In describing Scha-cheu our Venetian relates several peculiar customs which still obtain among the Chinese and their Tartar neighbours, together with several things which were afterwards observed and related by the Jesuit missionaries. From the City of the Sands they travelled to Kancheu, now considered as being within the boundary of China Proper, but then belonging to the very comprehensive district of Tangut. On his way Marco describes with glowing colours the joyous life and freedom of manners of the inhabitants of Kamul or Hamil, a place much frequented by caravans to and from China. Some of this account is startling, but its correctness has been confirmed by modern observers. The libertinism of the people was great; their love of pleasure excessive; but at the same time their pleasure could not all have been sensual.

“The inhabitants,” says Marco, “are worshippers of idols, and have their peculiar language. They subsist on the fruits of the earth, which they possess in abundance, and are enabled to supply the wants of travellers. The men are addicted to pleasure, and attend to little else than playing upon instruments, singing, dancing, reading, writing, according to the practice of the country, and the pursuit, in short, of every kind of amusement. When strangers arrive and desire to have lodging and accommodation at their houses, it affords them the highest gratification. They give positive orders to their wives, daughters, sisters, and other female relations, to indulge their guests in every wish, while they themselves leave their homes, and, retiring into the city, send from thence whatever necessaries may be wanted; but for which, it is to be understood, they expect payment; nor do they return to their houses so long as the strangers remain in them. . . . The women are in truth very handsome, and fully disposed to conform in every respect to the injunction of their husbands. It happened at the time when Manchou Khan held his court in this province, that the above scandalous custom coming to his knowledge, he issued an edict strictly commanding the people of Kamul to relinquish a practice so disgraceful to them, and forbidding individuals to furnish lodgings to strangers, who should be obliged to accommodate themselves at a house of public resort or caravanserai. In grief and sadness the inhabitants obeyed for about three years the command of their master; but finding at length that the earth ceased to yield the accustomed fruits, and that many unfortunate events occurred in their families, they resolved to dispatch a deputation to the Grand Khan, to beseech him to be pleased to suffer them to resume the observance of a custom that had been solemnly handed down to them by their fathers, from their ancestors in the remotest times; and especially as, since they had failed in the exercise of these offices of hospitality and gratification to strangers, the interests of their families had gone progressively to ruin. The Grand

Khan having listened to this application, replied, 'Since you appear so anxious to persist in your own shame and ignominy, let it be granted as you desire. Go, live according to your base customs and manners.' With this answer the deputies returned home, to the great delight of all the people, who, to the present day, observe their ancient practice."

Marco, on his way, also describes the asbestos, which he found woven into cloth that was incombustible like the famed salamander. As this curious fossil or earthy mineral was little known at the time in the south of Europe (although it was well known to the ancient Greeks and Romans, and by them used in the burning of dead bodies to retain a part of the ashes), Marco's description of it was held as one of those things for which he had drawn on his imagination. Yet that description was perfectly veracious and correct.

"The fossil substance which is procured from the mountains, consists of fibres not unlike those of wool. This, after being exposed to the sun to dry, is pounded in a brass mortar, and is then washed until all the earthy particles are separated. The fibres thus cleansed and detached from each other, they then spin into thread, and weave into cloth. In order to render the texture white, they put it into the fire, and suffer it to remain there about an hour; when they draw it out uninjured by the flame, and become as white as snow. By the same process they afterwards cleanse it when it happens to contract spots, no other abstergent lotion than an igneous one being ever applied to it."

Marco adds, with great honesty and simplicity, "Of the salamander under the form of a serpent, supposed to exist in fire, I could never discover any traces in the eastern regions." Benvenuto

Cellini, according to his own account, was more fortunate in this respect in the western regions. That rare goldsmith, engraver, chaser, sculptor, bronze-caster—almost everything in art—tells us very seriously and emphatically, that when he was a little boy, as he was sitting one night with his father by the fireside at Rome, his father said to him of a sudden, "Benvenuto, look into the fire, and see well what you see in it." The embryo genius looked, and saw something wriggling in the flames, as if it were an inconsumable snake or adder. "Son," said the gentle father, "'tis a salamander;" and as he said the words he gave Benvenuto a mighty slap on the face, the better to impress the circumstance upon his young memory. But, verily, Benvenuto Cellini, without quitting Europe, or travelling farther than from Italy to France or back again, tells stories almost as marvellous as those of any eastern traveller. If he had gone into the regions of the Orient he would have beaten Sir John Mandeville to nothing.

At this same part of his travels Marco also describes the Tartar country which produces rhubarb, a simple and valuable drug which had long been known in medicine, though few Europeans in those days knew whence it was brought. It is called by the Chinese *Ta-hoang*, or "yellow root." It is found in many parts of Tartary and Thibet, but the best grows in China Proper, near the Great Wall. There is a curious fact in natural history connected with its growth.

"It appears," says John Bell of Antermoney, "that the Monguls never accounted rhubarb worth cultivating, but that the world is obliged to the marmots for the quantities scattered at random in many parts of their

country. [He has mentioned before that wherever you see ten or twenty plants of rhubarb, you are sure to find several burrows of marmots under the shade of their broad-spreading leaves.] For whatever part of the ripe seed happens to be blown among the thick grass, can very seldom reach the ground, but must there wither and die; whereas, should it fall among the loose earth thrown up by the marmots, it immediately takes root and produces a new plant. After digging and gathering the rhubarb, the Monguls cut the large roots into small pieces, in order to make them dry more readily. In the middle of every piece they scoop a hole, through which a cord is drawn, in order to suspend them in any convenient place. They hang them, for the most part, about their tents, and sometimes on the horns of their sheep."

Our honest Scot often saw sheep at pasture with this good physic drying on their horns. Marco tells us that the most excellent kind of rhubarb was produced in Tangut in very large quantities, and that the merchants who procured loadings of it on the spot conveyed it to all parts of the world.

At Kan-chen, on the borders of China Proper, the Poli were detained a whole year. So long a time had elapsed since the father and uncle of Marco had left China as Kublai's ambassadors that they seemed to be forgotten; the Khan, moreover, happened to be in a distant part of his immense dominions, and for some months heard nothing of the detention of his Italian friends on the frontiers. As soon, however, as he was informed of that circumstance, he commanded that the state mandarins should take charge of the Poli, show them all the honours due to ambassadors, and forward them to his presence at the expense of the state. At Yen-king, near the spot where Peking now stands, the travellers, after a journey which had occupied no

less time than three years and a half, were honourably and graciously received, by the Grand Khan, in a full assembly of his principal officers. They performed the Kotoo, or nine prostrations, as they are now practised in the Chinese court, and Marco's father and uncle, then rising, related, in perspicuous language, all that they had done since their departure, and all that had happened to them, the Khan listening with attentive silence. The letters and presents of the Pope were next laid before the tolerant Tartar conqueror, who, it is said, received with peculiar reverence some oil from the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The great Kublai was then struck with the appearance of young Marco, and asked who he was.

"Nicolo Polo," says Marco, who speaks of himself in the third person, "made answer that the youth was his son, and the servant of his majesty; whereupon the Grand Khan condescended to take young Marco under his protection, and caused him to be immediately enrolled among his attendants of honour. In consequence of this distinguished notice he was held in high estimation and respect by all belonging to the court. He learned in a short time and adopted the manners of the Tartars, and acquired a proficiency in four different languages, which he became qualified to read and write."

These languages probably were, Mongul, Ighur, Manchow-Tartar, and Chinese. As soon as he had acquired the languages necessary for his functions, Marco was actively employed in affairs of great moment by Kublai, who, in the first place, sent him on a mission to Karazan (Khorassan or Kharisan, geographers are not decided which), at the distance of six months' journey from the imperial residence. He acquitted himself with wisdom

and prudence, and to the Khan's satisfaction. In describing this Karazan either he gave too easy credence to some tales that were told him, or his narrative, even after the chastening of Mr. Marsden, has retained somewhat of the fabulous interpolations of the old copyists. Here serpents assume a size that might almost satisfy the big scale of Sir John Mandeville. But instead of being serpents these creatures are really crocodiles or alligators, which the Chinese are said to call "water-serpents." Marco's description, however, is not correct even if applied to alligators, for he gives them two legs instead of four, claws like those of a tiger, and eyes as big as a fourpenny loaf. He attributes marvellous medicinal virtues to the gall of this animal, which he says is most highly esteemed in medicine, being a certain cure for the bite of a mad dog, and efficacious in many other cases. Of the people of Karazan he gives but an indifferent account.

"Before the time of their becoming subject to the dominion of the Grand Khan, these people were addicted to the following brutal custom. When any stranger of superior quality, who united personal beauty with distinguished valour, happened to take up his abode at the house of one of them, he was murdered during the night; not for the sake of his money, but in order that the spirit of the deceased, endowed with his accomplishments and intelligence, might remain with the family, and that through the efficacy of such an acquisition all their concerns might prosper. Accordingly the individual was accounted fortunate who possessed in this manner the soul of any noble personage; and many were murdered in consequence. But from the time of his majesty's beginning to rule the country, he has taken measures for suppressing the horrid practice, and from

the effect of severe punishments that have been inflicted, it has ceased to exist."

Marco mentions as a very remarkable circumstance that the people of Karazan ride with long stirrups like the French, and that they cut off one joint of their horses' tails, in order to prevent them from lashing it from side to side, and to occasion its remaining pendent. As the docking of horses' tails, which afterwards became so universal a practice in England, was unknown in Europe in the fourteenth century, this was set down as one of Marco's minor inventions. It should appear that Karazan was no other country than that distant province of China which is now named Yunnan, or probably only a part of that great province; and that in Marco's time it had been recently, and with difficulty, subdued by the Mongol Tartars.

The favour of the Poli at the court of Kublai Khan was increased not only by the services of young Marco, but also by those of his father and uncle, who, soon after their return to his court, offered him the fruits of their military and engineering observations, which had apparently been made during their sojourn in Palestine, that Holy Land where war never ceased until the Crusaders were all driven away from it. Nicolo and his brother suggested to the Khan the employment of catapultæ, or battering-engines, against the walls of Siangyang-fu, an important city, wherein the Chinese still held out against the Tartars, although the siege of that place had already lasted three years. The catapultæ were constructed under the superintendence of the Venetian brothers, and dragged to the spot. Down went the walls, and up went

their fame! Siang-yang-fu was presently taken. More favour was acquired by giving accounts of the countries they visited, whether for trade or for any other purpose, to the great Kublai, who had neither the time to visit all his provinces, nor perhaps the ability to comprehend the nature of their geography, productions, manners, &c. With superior science all the Poli had the indispensable qualification of knowing most of the languages which were spoken within this vast area.

“Marco, on his part (we again use his own words), perceiving that the Grand Khan took a pleasure in hearing accounts of whatever was new to him respecting the customs and manners of people, and the peculiar circumstances of distant countries, endeavoured, wherever he went, to obtain correct information on these subjects, and made notes of all he saw and heard, in order to gratify the curiosity of his master. In short, during seventeen years that he continued in his service, he rendered himself so useful, that he was employed in confidential missions to every part of the empire and its dependencies; and sometimes also he travelled on his own private account, but always with the consent and sanctioned by the authority of the Grand Khan. Under such circumstances it was that Marco Polo had the opportunity of acquiring a knowledge, either by his own observation or by what he collected from others, of so many things until his time unknown, respecting the eastern parts of the world, and which he diligently and regularly committed to writing, as in the sequel will appear.”

This seems to be only a frank, true, and fair exposition of the rare advantages which the Venetian traveller enjoyed. No modern European traveller has ever had the same.

So high did Marco Polo rise in the estimation and favour of the liberal-minded Kublai, who,

unlike the sovereigns who preceded and followed him on the throne of China, readily employed Arabians, Persians, and other foreigners, that when a member of one of the great tribunals was unable to proceed to the government of a city for which he had been nominated, the emperor sent the young Venetian in his stead. Marco mentions this honourable event of his life in the most modest manner, and only incidentally while describing the said city, which was Yang-cheu-fu, in the province of Kiang-nan, a place then of great importance, having twenty-seven towns under its jurisdiction. These are the Venetian's words, and the only allusion he makes to the subject :—

“ The people are idolators, and subsist by trade and manual arts. They manufacture arms and all sorts of warlike accoutrements, in consequence of which many troops are stationed in this part of the country. The city is the place of residence of one of the twelve great nobles, who are appointed by his majesty to the government of the provinces; and in the room of one of these, Marco Polo, by special order of his majesty, acted as governor of this city during the space of three years.”

The reader may be reminded that, by a fundamental law of the empire, no viceroy or governor could retain the government of one place for a longer period than three years.

Although loaded with honours and enriched by Kublai and by their own trade, the Poli, after seventeen years' residence in China, were forcibly moved by the natural desire of revisiting their native land. Kublai, their protector, was now stricken with years and infirmities; his death might leave them exposed to a less kind and liberal and less unprejudiced successor; and Marco's

father and uncle were themselves far advanced in age, and might well feel an ardent longing to leave their mortal remains in the beautiful city of the Adriatic which had given them birth. They spoke to the venerable emperor, whose answer was negative and decided, and not unmixed with reproach. "If they wanted more wealth," said he, "he was ready to gratify them to the utmost extent of their wishes; but with their present request he could not comply." The Venetians had no hope of conquering Kublai's pertinacity, when the following circumstance came to their aid. Arghun, a Mongol Tartar prince, who ruled in Persia, and who was the grand-nephew of the Emperor Kublai, lost his principal wife, who was also of the imperial stock. To replace her he sent an embassy to China to solicit Kublai for another princess of their own common lineage. Kublai readily consented, and selected from his numerous grandchildren a beautiful girl who had attained her seventeenth year. The betrothed queen set out with the ambassadors and a splendid retinue for Persia; but, after travelling several months, the turbulent state of some countries through which they had to pass prevented their progress, and they were obliged to return to the Chinese capital. During the matrimonial negotiations Marco Polo, whose passion for travelling increased with his means of gratifying it, was absent on the emperor's business, among the islands of the Indian Ocean; but he happened to return to China with the small fleet under his command just as the affianced princess found herself in this uncomfortable predicament. Marco boldly proposed that she should be carried to her husband by sea, an idea that never would have struck the

Chinese, who were timid navigators, or the Tartars, who were altogether ignorant of navigation, and who had only recently established themselves in maritime countries. Marco described, from his own recent experience, the Indian Ocean, which was deemed so very perilous, as safe and easily navigable. No doubt, from native and Arabian navigators, our Venetian had learned the grand natural phenomenon of the monsoons, with the varying of the winds according to the seasons of the year, the ordinary course of those winds, and other secrets which render it so pleasant to sail on that ocean when they are properly known and provided for. Year after year the Arabian traders still came from the Red Sea or from the Persian Gulf to the coasts of India, Malacca, Siam, and China. The ambassadors from Persia, who had now been three years on their mission, were as anxious to return to their native country as were the Poli to get back to Venice; and no sooner had Marco's observations reached their ears than they sought a conference with him. His explanations dissipated all their doubts, and, it appears, the fears of the affianced princess. He engaged he would carry them all to the Persian Gulf, at much less risk, expense, danger, and in much less time than the overland journey would cost them. But nothing could be done without the permission of Kublai Khan.

"Should his majesty," says Marco, "incline to give his consent, the ambassadors were then to urge him to suffer the three Europeans (the Poli), as being all persons skilled in the practice of navigation, to accompany them, until they should reach the territory of King Arghun. The Grand Khan, upon receiving this appli-

cation, showed by his countenance that it was exceedingly displeasing to him, averse as he was to parting with the Venetians. Feeling, nevertheless, that he could not with propriety do otherwise than consent, he yielded to their entreaty. Had it not been that he found himself constrained by the importance and urgency of this peculiar case, they would never have obtained permission to withdraw themselves from his service. He sent for them, however, and addressed them with much kindness and condescension, assuring them of his regard, and requiring from them a promise that, when they should have resided some time in Europe, and with their own family, they would return to him once more. With this object in view he caused them to be furnished with the golden tablet (or imperial passport), which contained his order for their having free and safe conduct through every part of his dominions, with the needful supplies for themselves and their attendants. He likewise gave them authority to act in the capacity of his ambassadors to the pope, the Kings of France and Spain, and the other Christian princes."

To convey the future queen of Persia a fleet of appropriate magnificence was prepared. It consisted of fourteen ships, each having four masts and nine sails, and four or five of them having crews of from two hundred and fifty to two hundred and sixty men each. With reference to Marco's description of the ships, Sir John Barrow has said—

"It is impossible not to consider the notices given by this early traveller as curious, interesting, and valuable; and as far as they regard the empire of China, they bear internal evidence of their being generally correct. He sailed from China in a fleet consisting of fourteen ships, each carrying four masts. . . . We observed many hundreds of a larger description that are employed in foreign voyages, all carrying *four* masts."*

* Travels in China.

We have not paused to notice all the instances in which the descriptions given by Marco Polo are corroborated by modern voyagers and travellers of indisputable correctness and veracity; for the instances are so numerous that it would be tedious to point them out. This fleet of fourteen ships was furnished by the Emperor Kublai with stores and provisions for two years. At their audience of leave the Poli were further enriched by the generous Kublai "with many rubies and other handsome jewels of great value." As he was still engaged in finishing the Grand Canal, and had in hand other extensive works of public utility which at the distance of more than five centuries and a half challenge the admiration of the well-informed European, and as he evidently took delight in the society of the Venetians, it could hardly have been without a pang that he witnessed the departure of such able, useful, and pleasant servants. Nor could it have been without some tender emotion, and some misgivings as to the fate which attended them in turbulent and constantly-warring Europe, that they quitted the pacific court and empire of the bountiful Khan.

Their remarkable expedition sailed from the Peho, or the river of Peking, about the commencement of the year 1291. It was three months in reaching Sumatra, and in a northern port of that island, near the western straits of Malacca, it waited five months for the change of the monsoon which was to waft it across the Bay of Bengal. On his way thus far, Marco touched at many interesting places, of all of which some description is to be found in the book he afterwards dictated. Some marvellous things are related, but the coasts and islands of those seas really abound in marvels; and

whenever Marco says that he himself saw this thing or that, we are almost sure to find that the same thing has been seen in more recent days by voyagers and travellers. During the long detention of the fleet at Sumatra, Marco was intrusted with the command on shore of 2000 men, there being probably only a few sailors left on board the ships to take care of them. He erected strong barricades or stockades to secure his Chinese from attack ; and in a short time so far conciliated the wild natives of the island, that they brought regular supplies of provisions to the encampment, and dealt kindly with the strangers. The rich and noble island of Sumatra which, rather more than five centuries after his visit, fell to the dominion of Great Britain, and which never ought to have been alienated from our rule, was in Marco's time divided into eight kingdoms or states, independent of each other. As eager as ever for information he visited six of them, and afterwards described them, "omitting the other two which he had not an opportunity of seeing." Mr. Marsden, his best editor, and the best judge that could be found of this part of the subject (seeing that he himself long resided at Sumatra, and wrote an admirable history of the country), bears testimony to the general accuracy of Marco's Sumatran sketches. On the coasts of the island many Mohammedans were settled, and the Arabian merchants who constantly frequented the seaports were in the habit not only of trading with the idolaters, but also of converting them to their religion. In the interior of the islands and on the lofty mountains which traverse it, were a filthy and savage people, living in a beastly manner and eating human flesh, and indis-

criminally all other sorts of flesh, clean or unclean. This description applies closely to the Battas of our own day, who inhabit a considerable portion of the interior of the island, towards the northern extremity, and whose cannibalism has been noticed by travellers of all periods since Sumatra was first known to Europeans. Mr. Marsden does not tell us whether he had good evidence for believing that in his time cannibalism was prevalent or occasionally resorted to by these Battas, who, in most respects, bear a close resemblance to the wild Veddahs of Ceylon, but he assures us that they ate all kinds of fowl meat. "It is only on public occasions," he says, "that they (the Battas) kill cattle for food; but not being delicate in their appetites they do not scruple to eat part of a dead buffalo, hog, rat, alligator, or any wild animal with which they happen to meet."* The interior of the country swarms with wild animals. Of some of these Marco gives a very faithful description. Of the rhinoceros, which was then scarcely known in Europe, although, many centuries before, it had been produced by the Roman conquerors at their triumphs and in their amphitheatres, he says very soberly—

"They are much inferior in size to the elephant, but their feet are similar. Their hide resembles that of the buffalo. In the middle of the forehead they have a single horn; but with this weapon they do not injure those whom they attack, employing only for this purpose their tongue, which is armed with long sharp spines, and their knees or feet; their mode of assault being to trample upon the person, and then to lacerate him with their tongue. Their head is like that of a wild boar, and they

* Hist. of Sumatra.

carry it low towards the ground. They take delight in muddy pools, and are filthy in their habits. . . . They are of a shy nature."

This, as far as it goes, is not an inexact description of an animal which has been remarkably obnoxious to the romancing of early travellers and writers. It has been turned into nearly all manner of shapes. The short-legged clumsy rhinoceros is the original type of the light and fleet unicorn. From the time of the Greeks all European travellers in the East had introduced pignies into their narratives, and had told wonderful stories about the tiny people. Marco honestly sets his face against these tales, and exposes the imposture of exhibiting stuffed monkeys for the bodies of wondrously small men. Still speaking of Sumatra, he says—

"There are found in this district monkeys of various sorts, and vultures as black as crows, which are of a large size, and pursue the quarry in a good style.

"It should be known that what is reported respecting the dried bodies of diminutive human creatures, or pignies, brought from India, is an idle tale, such pretended men being manufactured in this island in the following manner. The country produces a species of monkey of a tolerable size, and having a countenance resembling that of a man. Those persons who make it their business to catch them, shave off the hair and tail, leaving the hair only about the chin and those other parts where it grows on the body of a man. They then dry and preserve them with camphor and other drugs, and having prepared them in such a mode that they have exactly the appearance of little men, they put them into wooden boxes, and sell them to trading people, who carry them to all parts of the world. But this is merely an imposition, the practice being such as we have described; and neither in India, nor in any other country, however wild

and little known, have pigmies been found of a form so diminutive as these monkeys exhibit."

Mr. Marsden conjectures that the Mohammedan and Armenian traders who visited these islands of the Indian Ocean were in the habit of selling the stuffed monkeys to the virtuosi of Italy, for the mummies of a pigmy race of men. We have seen a few such specimens in the hands of antiquated collectors in the south of Italy, who would on no account be convinced that they were not remarkable and well-preserved specimens of human beings of a miniature size, who had once lived upon earth. Notwithstanding his denial of the existence of pigmies, our Venetian says that in the mountains of Sumatra are found men with tails a span in length, like the tail of the dog, but not covered with hair. He adds that they always dwell in the mountains, and never inhabit the towns. Mr. Marsden informs us that during his own residence in the island, and while he was as yet ignorant of the existence of Marco Polo's work, he was informed that there were two different species of wild people dispersed in the woods and mountains, and avoiding all communication with the other inhabitants. One of these species was said to be covered all over with long hair; but no tail was mentioned either in this species or in the other. In all probability these wild species were nothing but ourang-outangs. The particulars given about them were derived from the fancy of the natives. Marco did not pretend to have seen his tailed men. If Mandeville had spoken of them, he would not have failed to tell us that he had seen them with his own eyes, for the knight of St. Alban's always saw the

things of which he was told. In describing a certain tree from which is obtained a kind of meal, the Venetian gives a correct account of the sago tree. He says he frequently ate of loaves and cakes made of sago, and found it very good, and that he brought some sago home with him to Venice. And generally his descriptions of natural productions now common in Europe, but at that time scarcely known, are short, clear, and correct.

When the fleet sailed from Sumatra it passed the Angaman or Andaman islands, the inhabitants of which Marco describes as being "idolaters, and a most brutish and savage race, having heads, eyes, and teeth resembling those of the canine species; their dispositions are cruel, and every person, not being of their own nation, whom they can lay their hands upon, they kill and eat." Every subsequent account describes the inhabitants of these islands as a brutal, ferocious race, and nearly all are agreed in representing them as cannibals. They appear to be in every respect similar to the Papuas or natives of New Guinea; and as the lower part of their faces projects much more beyond the line of the forehead than those of the African, with little appearance of chin, our old traveller is excusable in comparing their heads to those of dogs. Mr. R. H. Colebrook, who visited the islands in 1787, concluded that "from their cruel and sanguinary disposition, great voracity, and cunning modes of lying in ambush, there is reason to suspect that in attacking strangers they are frequently impelled by hunger; as they invariably put to death the unfortunate victims who fall into their hands."*

* Asiatic Researches, vol. iv.

This gentleman adds that they are certainly the least civilized people in the world, being nearer to a state of nature than any other we read of. We believe that, from recent observation, even Sir John Barrow and other sceptics as to the existence of anthropophagi are compelled to admit, in the teeth of their theory, the cannibalism of the Andaman islanders. If cannibalism is not to be credited because its amount and prevalence have been fearfully exaggerated by old travellers, we might, by a parity of reasoning, throw discredit upon a hundred other facts.

From the savage Andamans, Marco and his fleet proceeded to Ceylon, called by him Zeilan. Of this magnificent island he does not say much; but the little he says is very correct, agreeing closely with the excellent narrative of Robert Knox, the English mariner who lived more than nineteen years captive amongst the natives, and who effected his escape from thence in 1679; as also with the recent accounts published by Mr. Cordiner, Dr. Marshall, and others. He does not describe the pearl fishery at Ceylon, but he has a description of it as he saw it carried on off the Coromandel coast, on the other side of the gulf or strait which separates Ceylon from the main. This was a subject for amplification and hyperbole. Extravagant tales had long been current in the West as to the natural formation of the pearl, and the methods adopted by the Indians to procure it. Yet Marco gives a plain, sober, unvarnished account of the pearl fishery.

“The business of the fishery is conducted in the following manner. A number of merchants form themselves into separate companies, and employ many vessels

and boats of different sizes, well provided with ground tackle, by which to ride safely at anchor. They engage and carry with them persons who are skilled in the art of diving for the oysters in which the pearls are enclosed. These they bring up in bags made of netting, that are fastened about their bodies; and then they repeat the operation, rising to the surface when they can no longer keep their breath, and after a short interval diving again. In this operation they persevere during the whole of the day, and by their exertions accumulate (in the course of the season) a quantity of oysters sufficient to supply the demands of all countries. The greater proportion of the pearls obtained from the fisheries in this gulf are round, and of a good lustre. The spot where the oysters are taken in the greatest number is called Betala, on the shore of the main land; and from thence the fishery extends sixty miles to the southward.

“In consequence of the gulf being infested with a kind of large fish [the shark], which often proves destructive to the divers, the merchants take the precaution of being accompanied by certain enchanters belonging to a class of Bramins, who, by means of the diabolical art, have the power of constraining and stupifying these fish, so as to prevent them from doing mischief; and as the fishing takes place in the day-time only, they discontinue the effect of the charm in the evening, in order that dishonest persons who might be inclined to take the opportunity of diving at night and stealing the oysters, may be deterred by the apprehension they feel of the unrestrained ravages of these animals. The fishery commences in the month of April, and lasts till the middle of May. The privilege of engaging in it is farmed of the king, to whom a tenth part only of the produce is allowed. To the magicians they allow a twentieth part. By the time the period above mentioned is completed, the stock of oysters is exhausted; and the vessels are then taken to another place, distant full three hundred miles from this gulf, where they establish themselves in the month of September, and continue till the middle of October.

Independently of the tenth of the pearls, to which the king is entitled, he requires to have the choice of all such as are large and well shaped; and as he pays liberally for them, the merchants are not disinclined to carry them to him for that purpose."

Little of this is altered in our own day. Tavernier, a competent judge (for he was a jeweller as well as a traveller), says that the best pearls are found at the place described by Marco Polo. The oyster bank extends in the direction and to the length described by the old Venetian. The fears and superstitions of the divers still render the shark-charmers a necessary part of the establishment of the pearl-fishery. All these charmers belong to one family, and no person who does not form a branch of it can aspire to that office. The divers have a firm confidence in their power over the sharks, nor will they descend to the bottom of the sea without knowing that one of these enchanters is present in the fleet. Two of them are constantly employed during the fishery. One of them goes out regularly in the head pilot's boat: the other performs certain ceremonies on shore. In the native language their name is "binder of sharks." The superstition of the people in this particular is favourable to the interests of government, and to the interests of the merchants who farm the right of fishing, as, from their terror at diving without the protection of the charms, they are prevented from making any clandestine attempts to plunder the oyster banks. Marco is quite correct as to the duration of the pearl fishery. He tells no marvellous story about the length of time that the divers by long practice could remain under water. Prodigious stories have been told by more modern

travellers. Mr. Marshall, who often observed these fisheries, and made his observations with a stopwatch in hand, says he rarely knew the submersion of any diver last longer than fifty seconds.

From visiting the spots himself, or from the descriptions of Eastern travellers, Marco collected information respecting Masulipatam, the diamond mines of Golconda, Cape Comorin, the pepper country, the pirate coast, or southern parts of Malabar, Guzerat, Kambai, Sumerat, and Makran. In speaking of these extensive regions he is very correct so long as he draws on his own observations, but he is far otherwise when he gives up his belief to the recitals of imaginative Orientals. This is particularly observable in his account of the diamond mines of Golconda, which have been in all ages a favourite theme of Eastern exaggeration and hyperbole. Here he will remind the reader of the adventures of that old man of the sea Sindbad, whose Arabian or Persian biographer, in all probability, only worked upon primitive materials as old as the age of Alexander the Great, or still older.

“It is in a deep valley among the mountains that the diamonds are found. During the rainy season the water descends in violent torrents among the rocks and caverns, and when these have subsided, the people go to search for diamonds in the beds of the rivers, where they find many. Messer Marco was told that in the summer, when the heat is excessive and there is no rain, they ascend the mountains with great fatigue, as well as with considerable danger, from the number of snakes with which they are infested. Near the summit it is said there are deep valleys full of caverns and surrounded by precipices, amongst which the diamonds are found, and here many eagles and white storks, attracted by the

snakes on which they feed, are accustomed to make their nests. The persons who are in quest of the diamonds take their stand near the mouths of the caverns, and from thence cast down several pieces of flesh, which the eagles and storks pursue into the valleys, and carry off with them to the tops of the rocks. Thither the men immediately ascend, drive the birds away, and recovering the pieces of meat, frequently find diamonds sticking to them. Should the eagles have had time to devour the flesh, they watch the place of their roosting at night, and in the morning find the stones amongst the dung and filth that drop from them."

It was from a very obvious policy that the Indian princes in all ages environed the diamond mines of Golconda with imaginary difficulties and dangers. Tavernier was told that the place was surrounded by men of a cruel nature, and by tigers and lions; but he adds that he found things quite different. When Mr. Motte requested permission to visit the spot, the minister of the prince told him that the rivers were so full he could not pass them; that there was nothing to be seen; that the country was unsettled, and the inhabitants too rude and mischievous to be trusted. With regard to *snakes*, this modern traveller saw one that might be considered as the dragon stationed to guard the treasure of the mine. The circumference of its body was upwards of six feet. This great snake, which appears to have been a boa constrictor, was worshipped by the mountain rajahs, whose belief was that its birth was coeval with the creation of the world, and that it and the world would die together. Its habitation was a cavern at the foot of a rock, at the opening of which was a plain of four hundred yards, surrounded by a moat.

The broad resemblance between Marco's valley

of Diamonds and Sindbad's valley has often been noticed and made matter of ridicule against the old Venetian. Mr. Marsden says that it has been ascertained that the inimitable Arabian tales were written chiefly about the middle of the thirteenth century; so that Marco, on his return homeward at the end of that century, might very well have picked up in Persia, Asia Minor, or Syria, Sindbad's story of the Valley of Diamonds; though, as Mr. Marsden afterwards shows, a similar story had been current in the East long before the 'Arabian Nights' Entertainments' were known. But Mr. Lane—the first to make that admirable picture of manners truly known to the European reader—shows that the tales were not written until considerably more than two hundred years after the death of Marco Polo. Mr. Lane says that the earliest period at which any portion of the work has been incontestably proved to have existed, is the year 955 of the Egira, or A.D. 1548.* As Mr. Marsden remarks, it is very probable that the story of the Valley of Diamonds was current in India and other parts of the Eastern world long before the date of these inimitable tales, and that the witty collector did no more than exaggerate the wonders, and dress up the incidents in his own way, as it is evident that he has done with respect to other stories apparently borrowed from the 'Odyssey' of Homer. But Homer himself was a borrower, and some of his incidents in the 'Odyssey' are de-

* The Thousand and One Nights, commonly called, in England, The Arabian Nights' Entertainments. A new translation from the Arabic, with copious notes, by Edward William Lane, author of the 'Modern Egyptians,' &c., London, 1839.

ducible from an Indian origin ; so that the people of Asia Minor, Syria, and Arabia, in borrowing from Homer, may only have taken that which he had himself borrowed from the remoter Asiatics. Mr. Hole, in his ingenious work, 'Remarks on the Arabian Nights' Entertainments,' fixes the antiquity of the tale of the Diamond Valley by quoting a passage from Epithanius, a father of the Christian church and bishop of Salamis, who died in the year 403. The bishop, in describing the twelve precious stones, draws the picture of a valley, and gives a description of the method of getting at the diamonds by means of pieces of meat and eagles, which tally completely with the descriptions given by Marco Polo. The only divergency is that the bishop fixes his diamond valley in Syria or Western Tartary ; where, be it said, diamonds have never been found. A later Italian traveller than Marco—Nicolo de' Conti—who visited the coast of Coromandel in the fifteenth century, fixes the Diamond Valley at Golconda, and gives an account of the mode of procuring the diamonds which closely agrees with that given by his countryman and predecessor. Nicolo de' Conti may possibly have been acquainted with some copy of Marco's book in manuscript ; but it is still more probable that he merely told the story as it was told to him by the natives.* A story closely resembling it is recorded in the travels of Benjamin of Tudela. The English translator supposes the Jew to have borrowed it from the 'Thousand and One Nights ;' but Mr. Hole is rather inclined to suspect that the account of Benjamin of Tudela, and that given in

* Ramusio, vol. i. p. 344.

Sindbad's voyages, were derived from one common origin. If we possessed all the Greek books that were written after the Indian expedition of Alexander the Great, we should, no doubt, find in some of them a similar tale. Many hundreds of Greek manuscripts that have since perished may have been known to Bishop Epithanius, who wrote in the fourth century.

On his way from the coast of Coromandel to Ormuz, in the Persian Gulf, Marco describes the islands of Socotra, Madagascar, and Zenzibar, or the southern part of the great peninsula of Africa. He also gives slight sketches of Abyssinia, and of several cities of the Arabian coast, avowedly on the authority of persons who conversed with him, and showed him maps of those countries and places. Speaking on this dubious authority, he has introduced in his description of Madagascar that monstrous bird the rukh or roc—another fable of the 'Thousand and One Nights,' but of a date, no doubt, much more ancient than that of the Arabian tales. The powers of Sindbad's roc are well known: it could lift up an elephant and fly away with it. In an Oriental coloured drawing in the library of the Asiatic Society there is a roc flying away with one elephant in his talons and another held by his beak.* But some of the Orientals set no limits to their calculations of the strength and magnitude of this monster bird. One of them seems to think that he is speaking within compass when he says that the length of one of its wings is about ten

* This drawing has been copied by Mr. Harvey, and an engraving of it will be found in Mr. Lane's richly illustrated book.

thousand fathoms.* Marco's hearsay bird is a mere wren compared with this fowl. He says—

“The people of the island report that at a certain season of the year an extraordinary kind of bird, which they call a Rukh, makes its appearance from the southern region. In form it is said to resemble the eagle, but it is incomparably greater in size; being so large and strong as to seize an elephant with its talons, and to lift it into the air; from whence it lets it fall to the ground, in order that when dead it may prey upon the carcase. Persons who have seen this bird assert that when the wings are spread they measure sixteen paces in extent, from point to point; and that the feathers are eight paces in length, and thick in proportion. Messer Marco Polo conceiving that these creatures might be griffins, such as are represented in paintings, half birds and half lions, particularly questioned those who reported their having seen them, as to this point; but they maintained that their shape was altogether that of a bird, or, as it might be said, of the eagle. The Grand Khan having heard this extraordinary relation, sent messengers to the island, on the pretext of demanding the release of one of his servants who had been detained there, but in reality to examine into the circumstances of the country and the truth of the wonderful things told of it: when they returned to the presence of his majesty, they brought with them (as I have heard) a feather of the rukh, positively affirmed to have measured ninety spans, and the quill part to have been two palms in circumference. This surprising exhibition afforded his majesty extreme pleasure, and upon those by whom it was presented he bestowed valuable gifts.”

It is idle to speculate upon what was the type or archetype of this feathered monster. The largest birds that are known to exist are the Condor and

* See Mr. Lane's curious notes to Sindbad's Voyages.

the bearded Vulture. Condors have been shot that measured thirteen feet between the tips of their extended wings, and that had talons eight inches long. The French savans in the expedition to Egypt measured a bearded vulture that was upwards of sixteen English feet from point to point of its expanded wings. These are great birds; but what are they to the rukh even of Marco? But imagination can magnify a mole-hill into a mountain. The Condor is not uncommon in Southern Africa. In the Arabic and Persian Dictionary the word Rukh is explained as the name of a monstrous bird which is said to have power sufficient to carry off a live rhinoceros. Its existence seems at one time to have been universally credited in the East. It appears to be the same as the fabulous Anka of Arab and Persian writers, one of whom says of it that it is the greatest of birds; that it carries off the elephant as the kite carries off the mouse; that, in consequence of its having carried off a young bride, God, at the prayer of the prophet, banished it to an island in the ocean, unvisited by men; that it lives a thousand and seven hundred years, &c. This Orientalist also mixes in its nature something of the qualities of the classical phoenix, in whose existence the Greeks and Romans, in their unsceptical time, seem to have firmly believed. A fanciful geologist might perhaps conceive that when earth had such monsters as the Megatherium and Ichthyosaurus the air must have had its birds of a proportionate magnitude, and that the Rukh or Anka is but a shadowy tradition of what once existed.

In speaking of the island of Socotra, Messer Marco very correctly describes the spermaceti

whale and the mode of harpooning it. He says that the religion of the island is Christianity, the people being duly baptised and under the government of an archbishop, who is not in subjection to the Pope of Rome, but to a patriarch who resides at Bagdad. There is ample testimony to prove that a corrupt sort of Christianity really existed in Socotra at an early period. One of the Arabian travellers of the ninth century says that the inhabitants of this island are Christians; that a colony of Greeks was established on the island by Alexander the Great, after the conquest of Persia, for the purpose of cultivating the aloes, which important drug is there grown in great quantities; that these colonists and their descendants occupied the island till the coming of Jesus Christ; that then, in common with all the rest of the Greeks, they soon embraced Christianity, and that they continue to exercise that religion, as well as the inhabitants of other islands off the African coast. When the bold Portuguese navigators doubled the Cape of Good Hope and came to these parts they found a species of Christianity still lingering at Socotra. J. de Barros calls the natives Jacobite Christians of the caste of the Habeshis or Abyssinians. Marco says that many pirates resorted to this island with the goods they had plundered, and which the Christian natives purchased of them without any scruple; justifying themselves on the ground of their being plundered from idolators and Saracens. This conscientious salvo, as Mr. Marsden observes, was very characteristic; but the Saracen or Arabian writers accuse the Christians of Socotra of having a more direct part in the piracy. Abul-

fedra calls them all "Christians and pirates." Great sorcerers also were they, according to our Venetian and many later voyagers. Marco says :

"The inhabitants deal more in sorcery and witchcraft than any other people, although forbidden by their archbishop, who excommunicates and anathematises them for the sin. Of this, however, they make little account, and if any vessel belonging to a pirate should injure one of theirs, they do not fail to lay him under a spell, so that he cannot proceed on his cruise until he has made satisfaction for the damage; and even although he should have had a fair and leading wind, they have the power of causing it to change, and thereby of obliging him, in spite of himself, to return to the island. They can, in like manner, cause the sea to become calm, and at their will can raise tempests, occasion shipwrecks, and produce many other extraordinary effects that need not be particularized."

This fame was long attached to Socotra, an island much exposed to storms and tempests. The early Portuguese navigators were terrified at the tales they heard and implicitly believed, as well as at some natural phenomena, which, though seen with their own eyes, were to them inexplicable. J. de Barros, a very grave historian of the sixteenth century, speaks of the sorceries practised by the women of Socotra, whom he styles "great enchantresses that do perform marvellous things."

In this way, as Mr. Marsden has proved with an amazing amount of labour and research, the wonders told by Marco Polo have not only a foundation in notions prevalent at his time, but have also a later existence.

With greater truth, or upon better information, Marco mentions the Giraffe or Cameleopard; and

when speaking of the African coast he correctly describes that interesting animal, whose existence was long called in question. He says—"It is a handsome beast. The body is well proportioned, the fore legs long and high, the hind legs short, the neck very long, the head small, and in its manners it is gentle. Its prevailing colour is light, with circular reddish spots." He mentions it as being common in Abyssinia.

After eighteen months' navigation in the Indian Seas, the Chinese fleet reached Ormuz, the place of their destination, which was in the territory of King Arghun, the destined husband of the Tartar princess, who had occasioned this (for the time) extraordinary voyage. "And here it may be proper to mention," says Messer Marco, "that between the day of their sailing and that of their arrival, they lost by death, of the crews of the vessels and others who were embarked, about *six hundred persons*: and of the three Persian ambassadors, only one, whose name was Goza, survived the voyage; whilst of all the ladies and female attendants one only died." A dreadful calamity, however, awaited the princess, who had braved so many dangers among cannibal islands and sorcery islands and tempestuous seas, and who had come all the way from China to Persia for a husband. This was nothing less than the death of that very husband.

"On landing they were informed that King Arghun had died some time before, and that the government of the country was then administered, in behalf of his son, who was still a youth, by a person of the name of Kiakato. From him they desired to receive instructions as to the manner in which they were to dispose of the princess, whom, by the orders of the late king, they had

conducted thither. His answer was, that they ought to present the lady to Kasan, the son of Arghun, who was then at a place on the borders of Persia, where an army of 60,000 men was assembled for the purpose of guarding certain passes against the irruption of the enemy. This they proceeded to carry into execution, and having effected it, they returned to the residence of Ki-akato, because the road they were afterwards to take lay in that direction. Here, however, they reposed themselves for the space of nine months. When they took their leave he furnished them with four golden tablets, each of them a cubit in length, five inches wide, and weighing three or four marks of gold. Their inscription began with invoking the blessing of the Almighty upon the Grand Khan, that his name might be retained in reverence for many years, and denouncing the punishment of death and confiscation of goods to all who should refuse obedience to the mandate. It then proceeded to direct that the three ambassadors [Marco, his father, and uncle] should be treated throughout his dominions with due honour, that their expenses should be defrayed, and that they should be provided with the necessary escorts. All this was fully complied with, and from many places they were protected by bodies of two hundred horse; nor could this have been dispensed with, as the government of Ki-akato was unpopular, and the people were disposed to commit insults and proceed to outrages which they would not have dared to attempt under the rule of their proper sovereign."

Of the after-fate of the young grand-daughter of Kublai Khan we are not informed. Kasan the son of Arghun succeeded in establishing himself on the throne of Persia in the year 1295, nearly five years after his father's death. But after their long and perilous adventures the Poli at length were fairly on their way home. In the course of their journey—that is, after they had left the residence of the Persian Regent, which appears to have been at Tabriz—

they received intelligence that the Grand Khan Kublai had departed this life ; “ which,” says Marco, “ entirely put an end to all prospect of their revisiting those regions.” Pursuing therefore their intended route they at length reached the city of Trebizond, whence they proceeded to Constantinople, then to Negropont, and finally to Venice, at which place, in the enjoyment of health and abundant riches, they safely arrived in the year 1295. On this occasion they offered up their thanks to God, who had now been pleased to relieve them from such great fatigues, after having preserved them from innumerable perils.

The dramatic scenes and adventures of our traveller's life were not destined to end with his safe return to Venice. On the arrival of the Poli there, they found that their fellow-citizens had long numbered them with the dead ; and that their mansion was occupied by some distant relations, who were long before they could recognise, after so many years' absence, the returned travellers as members of the Polo family. To make themselves known to their forgetful relations, and at the same time to impress all Venice with a proper notion of their identity, wealth, and importance, the three Poli gave a magnificent entertainment. When the numerous guests were assembled, the three travellers entered, clothed in long robes of crimson satin. When water had been carried round for the washing of hands, and the guests shown to their seats, they changed these costly vestments for similar ones of crimson damask ; these again they changed after the first course had been removed for robes of crimson velvet in the Oriental fashion ; and at the

conclusion of the banquet they doffed their velvet, and appeared in such plain suits as were worn by the gentlemen of Venice. The robes of satin, of damask, and of velvet, were taken to pieces, and their materials distributed among the attendants. Then, when the dinner table had been uncovered, and the domestics ordered to retire, Marco proceeded to an inner apartment, and presently returned with the three coarse thread-bare garments in which they were clad when they first sought admittance into their own house. They ripped open the seams, linings, and patches of these humble dresses, and brought to view such a quantity of diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, carbuncles, and other precious stones as dazzled both the eyes and the imagination of the beholders. At the display of such incalculable wealth the company was at once convinced that these were indeed "the honourable and valiant gentlemen of the house of Polo,"—all doubts vanished, and the hosts were treated with profound respect. This is a scene as Oriental as heart could wish.* But Ramusio, whose tastes and acquirements were classical, compares it to the return of Ulysses in the *Odysey*.

Not many months of tranquillity had, however, elapsed, when a hostile Genoese fleet, commanded by Lampa Doria, threatened some of the Venetian possessions on the opposite coast of Dalmatia. The galleys at Venice immediately put to sea

* Ramusio gives the account of this curious feast on traditional authority; telling us that he had heard it many times related by the illustrious Gasparo Malipieri, a very ancient gentleman and a senator of Venice, who had it from his father, who had it from his grandfather, and so on up to the fountain-head.

under the orders of Andrea Dandolo; and the adventurous Marco, as a patriotic citizen and an experienced seaman, took the command of one of them. The fleets soon met: Messer Marco, foremost of the advanced division, gallantly threw himself among the enemy; but he was not properly supported by his countrymen that were nearest to him, and after receiving a wound he found himself under the hard necessity of surrendering to the Genoese. The Venetians were defeated with great loss, and besides Marco Polo, Andrea Dandolo, their admiral, was among the many distinguished prisoners taken by Doria.

From the Dalmatian coast Marco was carried to a prison in Genoa; but his fame and the rumour of his adventures in the remote regions of the East had probably preceded him thither, and as soon as he was personally known to the Genoese nobility and citizens, who were all like himself imbued with the commercial spirit, he received every possible respect and attention, having all his wants liberally supplied; and the place of his detention, instead of a solitary and wearisome confinement, was daily crowded by visitors, who were as curious to know all about Kublai Khan and China, India and Ceylon, as the Venetians had been. Here, tired, as it is said, by being obliged so frequently to repeat the same stories, he first determined to follow the advice of those who urgently recommended him to commit his travels and adventures to writing. Accordingly he procured from his father at Venice all the notes he (Marco) had made on his different journeys. From these original documents, and from verbal additions to them, Rustighello or Rustigiello, a gentleman in

the Venetian service, who was in the daily habit of passing many hours with him, drew up the narrative in Marco's prison.* The manuscript is supposed to have been finished and partially circulated in the year 1298. The term *publication* is inapplicable. During Marco's lifetime few copies of it appear to have been made. Thus the book could have been known only to a fortunate few.

Marco's captivity deeply afflicted his father and uncle, whose fondest hopes were to see him suitably married at Venice, and become the father of sons who should continue the name and inherit the wealth they had accumulated. They petitioned and offered large sums of money to the Genoese for his liberation, in vain. It was not till after a lapse of four years, and in consequence of the exertions in his favour of the noblemen, and indeed of the whole city of Genoa, that Messer Marco obtained his liberty and returned to Venice. He then married a fair Venetian, and had by her two daughters and *no sons*.

Matteo, his uncle, the elder brother of Nicolo Polo, was honoured with an office of much importance in the magistracy; and all the three travellers seem to have been regarded, as they deserved to be, as the foremost men of the republic. When Nicolo died full of years and honours, his pious and affectionate son erected a stately monument to his memory "under the portico in front of the church of San Lorenzo, upon the right-hand side as you enter."† The church of San Lorenzo stood on one of the islets of Venice called "I Ge-

* According to Ramusio, Rustigiolo was a Genoese. Apostolo Zeno makes him a native of Pisa, and a fellow-prisoner of Marco. Tiraboschi has some doubts.

† Ramusio.

‡ Ib.

melli," or "The Twins." At what date Marco himself was gathered to his fathers in his own native place cannot be precisely ascertained, but his last will and testament is dated in the year 1323, and he probably died shortly after, at the good old age of seventy. According to Sansovino, Marco also had a tomb under the portico of the church of San Lorenzo.* At present neither the tomb of Nicolo nor that of Marco can be found anywhere in Venice. Old Nicolo, it appears, married a second wife after his return from the East, and had three sons. Of these only Maffeo Polo lived to have a family. This consisted of five sons and one daughter, named Maria; and as all the sons died without leaving issue, she, upon the death of her last surviving brother, inherited all the possessions of her father. With this event, which took place in 1417, the family became extinct in the male line, and the illustrious name of Polo was lost. This heiress, Maria Polo, married into the noble house of Trivisano, eminently distinguished in the *Fatti* of the Venetian republic.†

People did not wait for the death of Marco Polo to question his veracity, and to treat parts of the narrative of his travels with ridicule. Even in his native city, and not long after his return from the East, he was nicknamed "Marco Milione," or Mark Million, from his frequent use of that high numerical term in speaking of the countless population and immense revenues of the Tartar-Chinese empire, where, in sober truth, his numbers were by no means exaggerated, however much they might seem to be so to the divided and small states of Italy and to the then poor kingdoms of Europe.

* Venezia Descritta.

† Marsden.

Ramusio, who also held high offices in the republic, says, "By this appellation I have seen him mentioned in the public records of this republic, and the house in which he lived has, from that time to the present, been commonly termed the Court of the Millions."* Sansovino, however, attributes the popular application of this name to the immense riches possessed by the Polo family. In this sense the French call a rich man a millionaire, but *they* count their million in tenpenny pieces. As the term is applied to Marco by several old Italian writers, it certainly does not refer to his wealth, but to the high numericals contained in his book of Travels. It is also reported that when he lay on his death-bed, some of his scrupulous friends entreated him, as a matter of conscience, to retract such of his statements as appeared to them fictitious; and it is added that the old traveller indignantly rejected their advice, protesting that, instead of exceeding the truth, he had not told half of the extraordinary things he had seen with his own eyes. But after his death he was treated with still greater disrespect by an ignorant and frolicsome populace, much addicted in all times to ridicule and to parody. In the masquerades during the carnival the Venetians always had for one character a "Marco Milione," and this buffoon amused the mob by telling whatever extravagant tale came into his head. The fellow was but a vulgarised epitome or caricature of the peripatetic story-tellers of Alexandria, Cairo, and Constantinople. His chief jest lay in describing cities with a million of bridges, husbands with a

* *La Corte de' Milioni*. In the flourishing time of Venice it was usual to call the mansion of a great man his *corte*, or court.

million of wives, birds with a million of wings, beasts with a million of legs, &c.

When Marco wrote, although the population of Venice, Genoa, Florence, and of some of the Lombard cities was considerable, Italy was far from having recovered from the losses she sustained at the dissolution of the Roman empire; her population, moreover, was divided into a number of petty independent states; the very recollection of what had been the extent of the empire of which they had once formed part seems to have faded from the popular mind, and people turned with doubt from the traveller's account of the thousands of cities and millions upon millions of inhabitants in China. The exaggerations of fear and hatred had represented the Tartar tribes that had overrun a good part of the western as well as nearly the whole of the eastern world as little superior to wild beasts: how then could they believe that this very race in Tartary and China were highly civilised, living under a regular government, having magnificent cities, manufactures, and a commerce compared with which that of Venice (then the most considerable of Europe) sank into utter insignificance?

Marco Polo had also the misfortune to write long before the use of printing; and during a century or more the manuscript copies made of his work were liable to all the errors of careless and ignorant transcribers. These penmen, however, do not appear to have taken such great liberties with their text in the way of additions and interpolations as were taken with some others of our early travellers. In dealing with Marco, they often mistook his meaning or miscopied the words before them; but we scarcely find that they ever

invented incidents and stories for him. The book was afterwards translated into different European languages by those who were evidently ill acquainted with the idiom in which the travels were written. This appears to have been the Venetian dialect, which was very different then, as it is now, from the Tuscan, or literary language of Italy. These translators, moreover, were men lamentably ignorant of geography and the physical sciences. Their translations were again translated, and errors heaped upon errors. Thus, in English, old Hakluyt gave an account of Marco Polo's travels from an incorrect Latin version he had somewhere picked up: "and here," as Purchas observes, "the corrupt Latin could not but yield a corruption of truth in English."

At last, in 1559, more than two centuries after Marco's death, something approaching to justice was done him by his countryman Ramusio, who published a corrected Italian version of his narrative in the second volume of his *Navigations and Travels*. Within a few years after the appearance of this volume at Venice, Purchas used the translation, and made Marco Polo better known and far more popular than he had ever been in England. Robertson, Gibbon, and Dean Vincent also preferred Ramusio to all other editors and translators. Other editions and translations, or epitomes, continued to be made in different parts of Europe; but it was not till the year 1818 that full justice was done to Marco Polo by our excellent countryman the late Mr. William Marsden, whose book (then first published) is altogether one of the most remarkable that have been produced in our days.*

* The *Travels of Marco Polo*, a Venetian, in the thirteenth century, being a description, by that early traveller,

Mr. Marsden, as he has observed, had been himself long resident in the East: he was a good traveller, a good naturalist, well skilled in some of the Oriental languages, a careful observer, and a pains-taking and accurate writer. His quarto volume, of eight hundred and sixty pages, contains the results of many years of labour devoted to the task of validating the authority of the old traveller: other travellers and navigators of all ages and of all countries are quoted wherever they describe the countries or places visited by Marco; and from the mass of evidence thus collected, Mr. Marsden has established beyond the reach of doubt that the long-calumniated Venetian is most remarkably correct whenever a "*si dice*," or "it is said," or "I have been told," or "it has been reported to me," is not introduced in his text. When these or the like words occur, Marco is only telling what was told to him by the exaggerating Orientals, and he must, as we have before hinted, be listened to with reservation. By Mr. Marsden's valuable and curious volume (to use a favourite Oriental idiom) the face of Marco Polo has been whitened.

Modern and recent adventure and research have explained a good many things which appeared obscure in the Venetian traveller, and have rendered credible much which had once seemed incredible. No reading man will now venture to sneer at Marco Milione. He was the first European to give anything like a correct notion of the Chinese empire, and (if people would but have believed it) his account remained the best and completest that we possessed of that remarkable country.

of remarkable places and things in the eastern part of the world. Translated from the Italian, with notes, by William Marsden, F.R.S., &c. 1 vol. quarto, London, 1818.

Of the Great Wall of China, which, for its magnitude and the immensity of human labour employed upon it, has long and deservedly been classed among the wonders of the world, Marco never makes any mention. This, as writers have frequently observed, is a very strange and remarkable omission. Some have gone so far as to conclude from it that the Great Wall was not in existence in his time. But the late Sir George Staunton, and others well acquainted with the language and literature of China, have considered it unreasonable to doubt the universal assertion of Chinese annalists, that the wall was built three centuries before the Christian era. As it appears certain that Marco must have passed the wall several times, and at several different points,—as well in the northern part, where it shows itself in all its strength and magnificence, as on the western side of the empire, where it is little more than a terrace of earth, and by no means calculated to excite any degree of surprise or admiration—it is conjectured that the portion of his manuscript in which he described the wall, has by accident been lost, or omitted in the earliest transcriptions perhaps, as too improbable. Enough has already been said to convince the reader of the blunders, irregularity, and unfaithfulness of the scribes who for so many ages supplied the place of our faithful printers. As Mr. Marsden remarks, even the learned and pains-taking Ramusio, in his printed version, has omitted, without notice, and evidently without design, a whole chapter of the work, which existed in the earlier Latin editions, is necessary for the connection of the subject, and is indirectly referred to in a subsequent chapter of the same book.

But if our Venetian is silent as to the Great Wall, he is eloquent upon that other wonder of China, and of the world—the Grand Canal,—“an inland navigation,” says Sir John Barrow, “of such extent and magnitude as to stand unrivalled in the history of the world.”* After mentioning Kayn-Gui, a town situated at the entrance of the canal, on the southern side of the Kiang river, Marco says—

“Through this place is the line of communication with the province of *Kataia* by means of rivers, lakes, and a wide and deep canal, which his majesty [Kublai Khan] has caused to be dug, to unite the waters, in order that vessels may pass from the one great river to the other, and from the province of Manji, by water, as far as Kan-balu, without making any part of the voyage by sea. This magnificent work is deserving of admiration, and not so much from the manner in which it is conducted through the country, or its vast extent, as from its great utility, and the benefit it produces to those cities which lie in its course. On its banks, likewise, are constructed strong and wide terraces or *chaussées*, upon which the travelling by land also is rendered perfectly convenient.”

But Kublai Khan did not live to complete this stupendous work, nor was it finished in Marco Polo's time. Its completion, as it now exists, is said to have been effected about the year 1409. At present it affords an uninterrupted water communication for 1000 miles; while its advantage, in affording the means of irrigating some of the dryer parts of the country, is inestimable.

Our Venetian, though the native of a city built upon separate rocks and islets, where bridges were of necessity numerous, was struck with the prodigious number of bridges in some of the larger

* Travels in China.

cities of China. In describing "the noble and magnificent city of Kin-sai," then the capital of southern China, which is traversed by a river and many canals, he says, "it is commonly reported here that the number of bridges of all sizes amounts to twelve thousand."

"Those which are thrown over the principal canals, and are connected with the main streets, have arches so high and built with so much skill, that the vessels of the country can pass under them without lowering their masts, whilst, at the same time, carts and horses are passing over their heads; so well is the slope from the street adapted to the height of the arch. In fact, if the bridges were not so numerous, there would be no convenience of crossing from one place to another."

Twelve thousand bridges in one city! Oh, Mark Million, this seemeth a mighty stretch of fancy! But Marco, though he says that he frequently visited this city of Kin-sai, and that it merits its name of the "Celestial City" (which Kin-sai means), from its pre-eminence to all others in the world in point of grandeur and beauty, does not pretend to tell us that he counted the bridges. He merely says, "it is reported or famed (*è fama*) that there are so many." No doubt the fame was somewhat hyperbolical, yet there is every reason to believe, as well from his description of the place as from what is still seen to exist in other Chinese cities built among the waters, that the number of bridges was truly prodigious. It takes the traveller some time and trouble to count all the bridges, great and small, visible and almost invisible, that are now in Venice; and Kin-sai was then a gigantic Venice. The high praise which Marco bestows on the architecture of some of these

Chinese bridges, and on the noble span of their arches, has been confirmed by many modern, and even recent travellers.

“ In Xanadu did Kublai Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree :
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round ;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree ;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.”*

The description of this palace, as given by old Purchas, who merely followed that of our Venetian traveller, had such an effect upon a great modern poet, that he composed from two to three hundred lines upon it in his sleep. The description is indeed dazzling and marvellous, yet it does not appear in any essential particular to have exceeded the truth. Counting the enclosing park and gardens, the palace of Kublai Khan, at Xanadu, or Cambalu, occupied considerably more than ten English miles of ground. All the English gentlemen who attended Lord Macartney on his embassy to China in 1793 were astonished at the extent and magnificence of the Imperial Palace near Peking, and their descriptions of it closely correspond with those given by Marco Polo.† They found the river, the artificial lakes, the lofty hills raised by the hands of man and planted to the top with

* Coleridge, *Kublai-khan* ; or, a *Vision in a Dream*.

† See *Travels in China*, by Sir John Barrow and Sir George Staunton.

shrubs and trees, surrounding summer-houses and cabinets contrived for retreat and pleasure. The whole, at the first glance, bore the appearance of enchantment to our Englishmen. All the accounts of missionaries and travellers serve to prove that in point of structure, materials, and style of embellishment, there has existed a perfect resemblance between the buildings of Kublai Khan, as described by Marco, and those of Kang-hi and Kien-long in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.*

Although, for a traveller of the thirteenth century, our Venetian is remarkable for his good sound sense, his appreciation of the things which contribute to the ease and enjoyment of the great body of the people, his preference of the arts of peace to the glories of war, and his freedom from superstition, it is not to be supposed that he is altogether exempt from the spirit of the age in which he lived, or that he examines with a critical eye all the prevailing legends spread by the European monks, the Oriental Christians, and other devout fabulists. Messer Marco has no doubt that the Ark of Noah rested on the summit of Mount Ararat; but he does not tell us, as others have done, that he saw the fragments of it, and procured a piece of its timbers, or one of its nails. Nor does he tell us, like some of the early missionaries, that the ascent of the mountain is prevented to mortal man by supernatural causes. He simply says, "The ascent is impracticable, on account of the snow towards the summit, which never melts, but goes on increasing by each successive fall." He does not severely question

* Marsden.

the tradition of the Mohammedans at his time,* that Adam was buried in the island of Ceylon, on the top of the mountain called by Europeans Adam's Peak. But he follows up this story by telling us, that according to the tradition of the idolators or Budhists of the island, it was not Adam, but Budh, who had his tomb on the top of that mountain. He, however, gives us to understand that Kublai Khan not only believed the tale told to him by the Arabian traders, but also sent an embassy to Ceylon to obtain some of Adam's relics, and actually procured from thence two large black teeth, together with some of our first parent's hair, and a handsome vessel of porphyry !

"It appears," says Mr. Marsden, "that one at least of these sacred teeth escaped the cupidity of Kublai, or was subsequently restored to the King of Ceylon, from whose descendant it was wrested at so late a period as the Portuguese conquest of the island." But this great black tooth or tusk was revered by the Cingalese, not as the tooth of Adam, but as the tooth of Budh.

Marco does not seem to doubt that some of the mixed and predatory Tartar tribes possess the art of obscuring the sun at noonday, and of making a coat of darkness sufficient to cover thousands of men and many miles of country.

"In India they acquired the knowledge of magical and diabolical arts, by means of which they are enabled to produce darkness, so that persons are invisible to each other, unless within a very short distance. Whenever

* This tradition, like many others, seems to have varied at different times. See the account of the two Mohammedan travellers in the present volume, and the account given by Oderico da Pordenone in vol. ii.

they go on their predatory excursions they put this art in practice, and their approach is consequently not perceived."

Going to a far greater length than he usually does (for he almost always gives his marvellous story as a *si dice* or *on dit*), he says that he once witnessed this magic :—

"Marco Polo himself was once enveloped in a factitious obscurity of this kind, but escaped from it to the castle of Konsalui; some of his companions, however, were taken and sold, and others died in the hands of the robbers."

No doubt the honest man was involved suddenly in some mountain mist, his companions lost their way and were picked up by the marauders, and the credulous people of the caravan he was travelling with told him the story about the magical powers of the Tartars, the belief in such supernatural agency being then almost universal. Messer Marco talks rather frequently about evil spirits and the strange noises with which they filled the air, but he never pretends either to have seen or to have heard them. He, too, has the "Terrible Valley," where gold and silver are as plentiful as stones and pebbles, but where devils of the most malignant character keep guard over the treasure; but he does not go through this valley like the bold Sir John Mandeville. Those two mysterious beings, the Old Man of the Mountain, and Prester John, also figure in his pages, as do also Gog and Magog. But he speaks of them all much more discreetly than was common in those ages. He fixes the residence and dominions of the terrible chief of the Assassins in the right place—that is to say within the limits of the land which

the Persians named Kuhestan—and he gives the best account extant of his earthly paradise, and of the means he took to keep up the fanaticism of his disciples. It may be doubted whether the accounts found of these things in the narratives of the travellers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were not in good part pillaged without acknowledgment from Marco's manuscript, and inserted by the copyists with a due proportion of varnish and exaggeration, upon the *crescendo* principle. Prester John, who appears to be immortal, or as long-lived as the Delhi Lama of Thibet in most books of this age, is buried by Messer Marco, who does not even make a Christian of him, and who fixes his residence in the north of Tartary. He says he was a powerful prince, named in the language of the Tartars Un-khan, "by some thought to have the same signification as Prester John in our language." "To him," he adds, "the Tartars paid yearly the tenth part of the increase of their cattle." He asserts nothing on his own knowledge; and in relating some transactions which were understood to have taken place nearly a century before the time in which he wrote, he employs the guarded expression, "*come intesi*," as I heard. He indeed makes a Christian of one George, a descendant or successor of Prester John. He seems to assign as the residence or dominion of this George the country between the river Amur and the Baikal lake, occupied by the Tungusi tribe. Marco says:—

"He is both a Christian and a priest; the greater part of the inhabitants being also Christians. This King George holds his country as a fief of the Grand Khan; not indeed the entire possessions of the original Prester John, but a certain portion of them; and the sovereign always bestows upon him, as well as upon the other

princes of his house, his daughters and other females of the royal family in marriage. . . . Although subject to the dominion of the Grand Khan, the king being a Christian, as has been said, the government of the country is in the hands of Christians. Amongst the inhabitants, however, there are both worshippers of idols and followers of the law of Mohammed."

Very incorrect notions might exist both as to their power and as to their orthodoxy; but there seems no good ground for doubting that there existed in these ages, in the wide regions between Russia and China, a community professing some sort of Christianity. At an early period the Christian faith, according to the ritual of the Greek church, or the ritual of the Nestorians, had certainly spread extensively through Tartary, and had even penetrated into India and China.* Carpini and Rubruquis, as well as Marco Polo, found some few Eastern Christians in almost every country to which they penetrated, although they frequently lament that their doctrine and practice were corrupted, and that they were Christians in little more than in name. Nearly the same thing may be said of Abyssinia, where the habitat of a Prester John was afterwards fixed. In the hands of Marco, Gog and Magog are not giants, but countries—neither of them is a monster—

. . . . horrible and high
That with his tallness seems to threat the sky.

They are simply two districts, included within the dominions of the descendant of Un-khan and Prester John, lying in an easterly direction towards China. And here, he says, you pass many towns inhabited

* See ante, chap. iii.

by idolators as well as by Mohammedans and Nestorian Christians. With respect to the Scriptural names of Gog and Magog, he distinctly speaks of them as being improperly applied by Europeans, and as not being appellations known in the country.

Marco very commonly uses the word lion when he ought to use the term tiger ; and, now and then, when he repeats upon hearsay, he makes such monsters as the world has never seen ; yet generally his descriptions of animals and of other objects of natural history are remarkably clear, correct, and sober. He never pretends to have seen those monstrous creations which occupy so great a space in the book of the knight of St. Alban's, and which have so taxed the ingenuity of Mandeville's limners and illustrators. In several instances the extensive observation and experience of modern times have confirmed to the very letter the truths which were long doubted in Messer Marco's book ; and this has been the case not only in subjects connected with natural history, but also in other matters. If ignorance is the source of credulity and superstition in some things, it is certainly the copious source of incredulity in others. During the thirteenth and the two following centuries, the popular belief was so crammed with legends and palpable absurdities, that there was no room in it for the startling tales of an honest old traveller.

Since the publication of Mr. Marsden's most valuable edition considerable industry and research have been bestowed upon the subject of Marco Polo and his travels. In 1824 the Geographical Society of Paris published a very curious old French translation of the Travels, with an introduction by M. Roux. It was followed by an old

translation in Latin, which is also very curious, but apparently very incomplete. The precious old French MS. was found in the Royal Library at Paris. It appears to have been written about the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, long after the demise of the traveller. Although some few passages may seem rather clearer than in Ramusio or in the old Italian manuscripts, it is quite evident that the translator has taken great liberties with his original. M. Roux paid a respectful and proper tribute to the genius of Marco Polo and to the industry and research of his English editor. These two old translations, it must be noted, filled the first quarto volume published by the Parisian Society, who contemplated a work of immense extent.

"In so vast an undertaking," says M. Roux, "it was necessary to fix a starting point: we have fixed it in the midst of the thirteenth century. The globe then discovered its surface. Marco Polo appeared, and the genius of travelling took a new flight with him. We begin with his work the series of our publications: Geography owed him this homage."

Of the English edition which Mr. Marsden published in 1818, M. Roux says that it is enriched with the most precious notes and observations. This praise is not less warm than well-merited. Mr. Marsden devoted many years of his life to the task, and before undertaking it he had lived many years in the East, and in some of the countries which the Venetian describes. An excellent observer, a good naturalist, a skilful Orientalist, and a man of admirable common sense, Mr. Marsden could not fail of producing a most valuable edition and commentary; and his book still remains the completest and the best.

In the year 1827 Count G. B. Baldelli Boni published a new Italian edition of the *Travels*, under the title of '*Il Milione di Marco Polo*.*' The Count followed a famous old manuscript which is known by the name of *La Crusca*. This is *supposed* to be the earliest and best of the Italian MSS. now in existence, but it has certainly no claim to be considered as the original MS. which Marco Polo dictated, or for which he furnished the materials. The noble editor advances a strange theory, that the original was written not in Italian, but in French, and that the first person who wrote it from Marco's dictation or information was not an Italian, but a Frenchman, being, in fact, none other than the once famous Rusticien, who wrote an abridgment of the histories connected with the Knights of the Round Table; and, finally, that the old French manuscript published by the Parisian Society is but a transcript of the original work, or that very work itself. This theory has been taken up cautiously by M. d'Avezac and M. Parris,† and without any caution at all by Mr. Hugh Murray.‡ It seems to us to be altogether without foundation. Many years ago the learned Tiraboschi agitated the question as to which of the dialects of Italy the first manuscript was written in, or whether it was written in Venetian, which was the language of Marco, or in the Genoese, which was spoken in the place of his captivity; but neither Tiraboschi nor any other investigator ever saw any reason to doubt that it must have been written in some sort of Italian.

* *Il Milione di Marco Polo, Testo di Lingua del Secolo Decemoterzo ora per la prima volta pubblicato ed illustrato dal Conte Gio. Batt. Baldelli Boni. Firenze, 1827.*

† *Recueil de Voyages, &c., par la Société de Géographie.*

‡ *The Travels of Marco Polo, &c., Edinburgh, 1844.*

Count Baldelli Boni's text may, however, be consulted, and compared with Mr. Marsden's English version, with some little advantage; and the editorial notes clear up a few passages (a very few) which had been left somewhat obscure after all the pains-taking of our venerable English editor.

We shall conclude our notice of this truly illustrious Venetian by quoting a MS. and hitherto unpublished letter of that great governor-general of India, excellent traveller, and minute observer, Warren Hastings.

“Daylesford House, 18th May, 1818.

“At your recommendation I have bought Mr. Marsden's translation of Marco Polo's Travels, a book which reminds me almost painfully of the following line of Crabbe:

‘And ladies read the book they cannot lift.’

You may, however, gather the kind of interest which I have already taken in it, when I have told you, as I do, that I have read, besides the introduction (a work of no small intricacy, to a mind so worn that it cannot be sure of spelling a word of four syllables without losing one of them by the way), seventy pages of the body of it, in only a part of two days, in which it has been in my possession:—but this is not the purpose for which I began my letter, but the following: In the fifty-third page of the book it is related that in a certain lake, not far from the Caspian Sea, ‘fish never make their appearance until the first day of Lent, and from that time to Easter Eve they are found in vast abundance, but on Easter-day they are no longer to be seen, nor during the remainder of the year.’ Now it may appear a strange coincidence that should bring the Caspian or one of its subsidiary bodies of water and the pond of Daylesford into a mutual comparison, but it is a fact which I vouch on the credit of my own veracity, that about the time that I was beginning to collect a store of carp and tench for my pond at Daylesford, it chanced that somebody sent me a pre-

sent of some jack, which I ordered to be put into one of the stews till I should want them. I had sent for a famous breeder of fish from Banbury for his advice, who, as soon as he came, accosted me with a look of alarm, and said, 'I see, sir, that you have got four or five brace of jack in a stew there. I advise you to part with them as soon as you can. Your surest way will be to send them at once to the kitchen, for if you should leave them where they are till *Shrove Tuesday*, you may depend upon it they will spawn, and then your pond will be all stocked with jack and pike, and you will never get any other fish to breed in it; nor will you get rid of these.' By this anecdote it appears* that the popular superstition is equally prompt to ascribe the same influence to the recurrence of the feasts and festivals of religious appointment at Banbury, as on the coasts of the Caspian Sea, or the lake of Aral: for you will observe that the fish of both countries are mentioned as deriving their nativity from the times of their common relation to the ecclesiastical, not astronomical calendar. But this agreement, though in a palpable falsehood, is a proof of the veracity of the traveller. I hope my reasoning upon this subject is fair; for I shall never get through another so much to my own satisfaction: besides, I feel an interest in its favour, extending both to the writer and his translator and annotator: which indeed is a plausible reason to make me mistrust my opinion upon them and their work altogether."*

If death had not interrupted the octogenarian while he was studying Mr. Marsden's book, we no doubt should have had many other amusing notes from the able hand of Hastings, explanatory of obscure or startling passages in Marco Polo's travels.

* Letter to Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, Esq.

END OF VOLUME I.

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